

The Chesapeake Ripper

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The Chesapeake Ripper

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Summary

However prim and proper and polite Doctor Hannibal Lecter may be, he's also a psychopathic cannibalistic serial killer in the throes of a midlife crisis. Needless to say, he only has himself to blame when a whirlwind of an omega takes him by storm.

This is his complete and utter undoing. Getting ruined never felt so good.

Notes

I've read so many stories about Will's becoming, so I've decided to write the story I've been wanting to read for awhile. It's one where Will has already become and wreaks wonderful havoc on Hannibal's life.

[This](#) is what I imagine Hannibal wearing in this chapter. (Early 40s)

[This](#) is how I imagine Will in general. (He's 20 in my mind)

I don't have a beta. You're more than welcome to point out any mistakes you might find.

Chapter 1

Hannibal supposes this is what a midlife crisis looks like. He thought he was above such things. He's not prone to mental illness, has never experienced it himself unless you count psychopathy and cannibalism as afflictions of the mind. Hannibal doesn't. One is a state of being, the other a mere hobby, perhaps a lifestyle—the polar opposite of veganism and without all its sanctimonious preachers. Hannibal is no preacher. He's a dandelion seed that gently floats through the air, subtly piercing your skull, burying himself in your brain and tangling his roots in your thoughts. Before you can say "I'm fucked," you don't know what's him and what's you.

And yet, even with all his skillfully designed manipulations, Hannibal grows tired, he grows *bored*. A belly full of meat and a house full of luxury can only content a mind such as his for so long. Despite his life being full, he's begun to feel empty. Worse, he feels *lonely*.

That's how he finds himself at this singles soiree hosted by one Alana Bloom. As near and dear of a friend as she is, he fights down a scowl as she smiles across the room at him. With a manicured and dainty hand, she lifts her wine glass, a silent greeting, her kind hooded eyes hiding nothing of her amorous thoughts. He graciously smiles back, lifting his own glass before taking a sip, rolling the crimson liquid over his tongue, thoroughly tasting it. It's perfectly adequate. However, like most things these days, it inspires nothing within him.

Once upon a time, Alana had been something of a muse. She niggled at the softer fleshy bits of himself, ones long hardened now. She made him think of things he'd never thought about before—marriage and children. She wasn't like him, though. She could never possibly understand. She wasn't suited to a 'lifestyle' such as his, nor was she befitted to carry, let alone raise progeny as exceptional as his would surely be. Her righteousness would only stunt them, holding them back from their true potential. It would hold him back as well, all but neuter him. And what's a man without his balls? What's Hannibal Lecter without his meat?

Hannibal takes another sip of his wine, scouring the opulent hall for something or someone that might interest him. A crystal chandelier hangs overhead, its soothing yellow luminescence has the room aglow as alphas, betas, and omegas alike mingle, clothed in finery and shiny baubles. Hannibal inhales a breath through his nose, scenting the air, the cloying stench of cooling hors d'oeuvres, expensive perfume, and conceit are as thick as the wine in his glass.

Sometimes he wonders why he wanted to be a part of all this, these people. It was a game at first. A goal. How funny would it be if high society rejoiced in the company of a cannibalistic serial killer? How silly would it be if they sat at his dinner table and ate one of their own?

It's no lie that Hannibal enjoys all the superfluities his wealth affords him. However, the company amongst rich socialites leaves something to be desired. He'd say he's a wolf among swine, yet even *pigs* have redeeming qualities. These people flounce about, fake and phony, all trying to one up each other. They speak of trips abroad, the penthouse they just bought in

the heart of town, and things they deem scandalous, like, “Did you hear? I heard Alexandria’s daughter had an abortion!”

It’s mind numbingly mundane. The inauthentic boastful babbling of alphas, the trilling voices of beta women gossiping, and the simpering omegas—few as they may be—is all. so. *boring*.

Speaking of omegas, he feels one at his back now trying to gather his attention, prodding at his shoulder with a pudgy finger. Hannibal sighs, taking a swig of his wine, too much to be considered polite. He turns around and plasters on a mask of congenial psychiatrist, nodding hello to his clingy, obsessive—obsessively clingy—patient Franklyn Froideveaux.

“Franklyn,” Hannibal greets, almost a question, a smothered ‘why are you here?’ A hidden, ‘how dare you deign my presence.’

Hannibal, despite having a rather zealous sense of grandeur is a mere mortal alpha, and although he is of the finest pedigree, he is not immune to wily omega pheromones. With that being said, he could only describe Franklyn’s scent as offensively obtrusive much like the omega himself, the portly neurotic man that he is.

“Doctor Lecter! I didn’t know you frequented these sorts of things,” Franklyn says, dishonest in his surprise to find the good doctor here. He’s as excitable and anxious as ever, wringing his stumpy fingers together while a revolting beading of sweat dampens the front crown of his dark hairline.

Hannibal vividly imagines snapping the stem of his wine glass and stabbing the sharp end of it into Franklyn’s left eye. It calms him as he replies, “I don’t normally. My good friend Alana Bloom insisted.”

Franklyn’s beady eyes search Hannibal’s reserved gaze. “But you *are* looking for love? A mate?” he questions, obviously and shamefully hopeful.

Hannibal is not usually a man so easily disturbed, he’s a cannibal after all. He’s the kind alpha, the kind of predator, that prefers artfully arranged *corpses* over sex. He feels euphoric after a kill—powerful, godlike, so easy it is for him to snuff out a life, to feast on swine. He also quite enjoys the squish and slide of bloody organs. Quite likes the tickling trickle of blood as it dribbles down his forearms—likes the taste of it even more.

Nevertheless, Franklyn’s desire disturbs him. The fact that he’s so disillusioned as to believe it could be requited only exasperates such matters.

“Franklyn...” Hannibal delicately warns, gaze discretely roaming over the omega’s fuzzy rounded jowls, his bulbous nose, and his prying dimwitted eyes that sit too close together. What Hannibal wouldn’t give to pluck those intrusive gelatinous orbs right from their sockets. Oh, how he yearns to peel the flesh and fat from Franklyn’s skull, to crack his cranium open and see what’s inside. Truth be told, Franklyn would look far more fetching that way. He’d be mouthwatering.

Franklyn nervously chuckles for all the wrong reasons, face flushing a nauseating pink. “It’s just... now that we’ve become such close friends,” he reaches out, fingers closing in on

Hannibal's forearm, about to touch a devilishly red stripe of Hannibal's crimson and noire window pane plaid suit.

Hannibal pulls away before the touch can land, taking a quick step back, clumsily bumping into someone in his haste to be rid of Franklyn's repulsive touch. He turns, ready to apologize for the collision, but the words swiftly escape him as he becomes witness to what, on first inspection, Hannibal can only describe as a seraph in disguise.

Molten blue eyes, stormy and wild, the rise and fall of raging seas. Hannibal is confident they have swept many a poor man overboard, every one of them succumbing to those unfathomable depths. Hannibal can imagine worse and more creative fates to be had—has even dealt them himself. Still, he's never been eager to drown, yet now he finds himself curious.

He looks away—because good things come to those who wait—and lets his vision casually wander. Light scruff over sun kissed skin framing petal pink lips. Golden light shines much like a halo over hickory brown curls that have been brushed through, making them frizzy, or perhaps it was all in a day's hard work.

The young man is dreadfully underdressed for a gathering such as this, clothed as he is in stained blue jeans, a tear at one knee, likely from wear not for aesthetics, and a simple grey t-shirt with a loose-fitting plaid flannel button-up hanging over top—a few stray furs, none of which match, clinging to the fibers. He smells like motor oil and dog, but there's a dazzling hint of fertile omega underneath all that which pairs nicely with the apologetic smile he aims at Hannibal, albeit with food in his mouth and one cheek stuffed.

Hannibal's sight drops to the little plate in the man's calloused hand, used to hard labor, Hannibal can tell, not fine China which it clutches to now. Hannibal's vision comes to the marble floor where hors d'oeuvres are spilled around clunky steel toed boots, worn from time and frequent wear.

They crouch in time, reaching for the food as Hannibal utters a polite, "My apologies. I'm not usually so careless."

The man awkwardly laughs, a breathy little chuckle—a siren song, really. Hannibal doesn't dare to look up from the floor where he gathers pimiento croquettes. "It was my fault," the man admits, his voice decidedly unique in its unrefined yet gentle masculinity, "I was coming over to introduce myself."

Hannibal's insides tense with something akin to excitement—he doesn't let it show on his face. He slowly slides his calculating gaze upwards, their faces but a foot apart, soft breaths co-mingling as Hannibal gingerly places the gathered hors d'oeuvres on the plate the man holds, meeting his eyes, asking, "Were you?"

The young man shrugs, dipping his head, and plucking the remainder of the food off the floor—two Prosciutto-Wrapped Figs. He plates them and then, in one quick movement, his steely eyes determinedly flick upwards, meeting Hannibal's own, admitting, "Hard to ignore the peacock in the room." Hannibal's brow furrows, a question, and the man's cheeks pleasantly flush as he nods to Hannibal's suit. "You can't tell me you don't want to be noticed."

Hannibal ruminates on that statement, and as he stands—the young man gracelessly following—he smooths a hand over his front, straightening the collar of his white dress shirt and his silk paisley tie, a matching white save for the crimson floral design, it neatly tucked into his black waistcoat.

With one corner of Hannibal's mouth ticking upwards, he decides he approves of the young man's words. He isn't wrong. Hannibal does like to be noticed in all things—even if it does require an alter ego.

Hannibal muses, "Considering you found yourself beguiled into action by my coloring, do you see yourself as something of a peahen?"

The young man sputters out an embarrassed laugh, the pretty flush of his cheeks reaching the smooth, delicate flesh of his neck. He opens his mouth to speak, but is cut off by a rather *rude* clearing of a throat.

"Doctor Lecter and I were in the middle of a conversation." *Franklyn.*

Again, Hannibal finds patience within the wine in his glass, letting the last dredges of it slide down his overly eager gullet. The young man throws a subtle, albeit bemused smirk Hannibal's way, a glint of a knowing eye, conspiratorial almost. Hannibal can't deny that he hungers for someone to conspire and plot and play with. However, he's not unreasonable enough to believe that a young man with ripped jeans and—*mercy*, who just shoved a whole pimiento croquette, one that Hannibal had just retrieved from the floor, entirely into his mouth—has a constitution capable of keeping up with him.

The man must see something in Hannibal's dithering gaze, turning his sights on Franklyn who has a rather caviling sneer adorned his repugnant mouth—as if *he*, the sweaty, nettlesome, boar of an omega has any place in the world to judge another.

"What?" The young man questions, glancing between Hannibal and Franklyn, "Five second rule." He pops a prosciutto-wrapped fig into his mouth and holds out the plate to Hannibal. "These are great. You should try one," he suggests, mouth half full. He astutely notices Hannibal's polite reluctance—chews and swallows—adding, "C'mon, I made them."

Hannibal considers, yet hesitates, hand twitching at his side. Ever curious, he asks, "Did you honestly?"

The young man snorts out a huffy laugh, a merry boyish grin striking quite the handsome picture—the love child of Adonis and Apollo. The man steps nearer, leans closer to Hannibal, they're eyes meeting once more. Hannibal swears he feels tectonic plates shifting beneath his feet, mountains moving, air like static, and he struggles to breath as those pools of sapphire blue engulf him.

"Would you have eaten one if I had said yes?" The man teases, bumping his shoulder against Hannibal's, although with their heights as they are, the young man's shoulder nudges against the middle of Hannibal's upper arm. It's a friendly, playful gesture that Hannibal is not particularly accustomed to, yet not entirely opposed to either.

Despite the single lingering fur—a border collie most likely—the man leaves behind on Hannibal’s pristine suit, the good doctor finds himself perhaps a bit enchanted, a slight smile painting his lips as he nods his head in affirmation. He would have indeed eaten food off the floor had such a bizarrely charming creature gone through all the effort to make it.

Franklyn clears his throat a second time, directing his attention to the young man, inquiring, “Are you the help?”

Rude, thinks Hannibal.

“Oh, *shit*, no,” the man awkwardly laughs, glancing down at his wear, “Coming here was a bit of a spur of the moment thing. I knew I’d be underdressed, but I didn’t think—” Again he looks down at himself, not self-consciously, no, just self-aware. He lifts his arms in a ‘what can you do, it is what it is’ kind of manner. Unfortunately, this results in his hors d’oeuvres sliding off his plate where they tumble once again to the floor.

His dashing face adorably reddens while Franklyn’s irksome presence radiates annoyance, a sour expression crossing his unpleasantly round features. In an ideal world, Hannibal would grab the first blunt object he could reach, then promptly use it to pulverize Franklyn’s unholy face into pulp and goo.

Hannibal does not live in an ideal world, so he settles for crouching a second time, contentedly helping the young man gather the splayed food. It earns him a bashful yet appreciative smile.

“I won’t eat them this time,” the man says, dropping a few hors d’oeuvres to the plate, “It’s probably God trying to tell me something.”

Hannibal places his own couple pieces onto the fine China, and as they rise, he says, “How fortunate I am to meet one of God’s favorites. It’s not every day I am graced the company of a man worthy of divine intervention.”

Despite the diffident little chuckle the young man emits, his eyes are mirthful and he manages to confidently retort, “Consider yourself blessed.”

“And charmed,” Hannibal adds for good measure. The young man smiles, a grin that blooms like summer, bright and alive, but Franklyn—the locust that he is—shrivels it in its infancy as he clears his throat for a third time.

Hannibal turns his attention to Franklyn, fondly imagining all the creative and bloody ways one might turn such a disgrace into a publicly displayed masterpiece.

“Are you well, Franklyn?” Hannibal queries, feigning concern.

Franklyn fervently nods. “Yes, quite, it’s just that...” he glances to the young man, glowering at him, though it quickly twists into something of a pained smile. At the very least, Franklyn attempts civility and errs on the side of politeness as he proffers a clammy hand to the young man. “I’m Franklyn Froideveaux, and who might you be?”

The young man hurriedly wipes a few stray crumbs and the shine of cooking oil from his fingertips onto the thigh of his jeans. He readily takes Franklyn's plump stubby hand in his own delightfully masculine one. As rough and calloused as the man's hand may be, motor oil staining beneath his blunt nails, there's still an elegance to it that Hannibal finds alluring.

"Will Graham," The young man says, introducing himself.

Something ignites within Hannibal, roars to life as he does a furtive double take of the young man. Could this be *the* Will Graham? The wild little orphan boy that emptied an entire Ruger 10/22 into the chest cavity of his step father? Granted, said step father had been the Minnesota Shrike.

Garrett Jacob Hobbs, better known as the Minnesota Shrike, made a name for himself by strangling his victims, all of which were omegas between the ages of twelve and eighteen. Each and every one of them had bright blue eyes and mousy brown curls. He'd mount their bodies on antlers and slice open their bellies, gutting them. He'd stuff pillows with the hair of his victims, made lamp shades out of the flesh of their skin, and even carved intricate little trinkets out of their bones. It was all rather pedestrian if you asked Hannibal, but as for what Hobbs did with their organs and meat, that's been widely debated. Hannibal has an inkling—takes one to know one, or so they say.

All things considered, Will Graham seems remarkably put together for an omega whose guardian found him quite the muse and preyed on his doppelgangers, presumably saving the best for last. Omegas aren't known for their strong constitution, rather their delicate one. Their finicky minds are prone to neurosis and fits of hysterics, often needing the guidance of a softhearted and tender-handed alpha. Their nature is through no fault of their own, it's simply biology, yet Hannibal can't find it within himself to respect it. How cruel a fate it must be to be nothing more than a frightened little sheep yearning for a big strong shepherd.

Will Graham, however, is clearly no sheep. He's a peahen, and while peahens are considerably duller—lacking a certain flare—compared to their peacock counterparts, they yearn for the best and brightest, both in mind and color, in a mate. Hannibal can't fault a peahen such as Will for finding his way near, not when Hannibal's tail feathers are the best and brightest in the room.

Will and Franklyn's hands part ways, the latter with a tight-lipped smile, *rudely* noting, "I can't say I've heard of you before." *Imbecile*.

Will wolfishly grins, all teeth. "Likewise."

Hannibal is pleased to watch that strained smile fall away from Franklyn's impertinent mouth. Will wastes no time turning his body Hannibal's way, outstretching that handsome hand of his which Hannibal cordially accepts. Will's smile gentles as their hands meet, although, Hannibal can't help but notice the ever so slight gleam, a little flutter of light behind the young man's eyes—a peek behind the curtain if you will—that betrays his mischievous and unrepentant nature. It's rare that Hannibal finds himself intrigued. There isn't much that truly captures his attention these days, but he thinks he might have just found a rather fetching something.

With their hands clasped, Hannibal enjoys their contrast and especially their similarities. Where Will's hand is rough, skin lacking moisture, Hannibal's is soft, manicured even. Both are equally strong, Hannibal comes to find as Will squeezes his hand, saying, "It's a pleasure to meet you...?"

"Hannibal Lecter," Hannibal graciously finishes.

"*Doctor* Hannibal Lecter," Franklyn divulges, preening like he's privy to information that is not readily available to the public.

Will's eyes light up, not with excitement or dollar signs, just renewed interest. He lets go of Hannibal's hand, flirtatiously theorizing, "Handsome and smart, hey?"

Hardly immune to flattery from beautiful curiosities, it perchance being Hannibal's largest of weaknesses, he does his best to keep his expression pleasant and not entirely Cheshire cat like as he responds, "I didn't want to boast."

"Doctor Lecter is a *very* humble alpha," Franklyn eagerly praises, forcing Hannibal to internalize a long-suffering sigh.

Doctor Hannibal Lecter is a great many things—a talented surgeon, an extraordinary psychiatrist, and Baltimore's most prolific and notorious serial killer. He's a criminal genius and the Chesapeake Ripper, whom which is best known for their extravagant, albeit macabre displays of art. Psychopath though he may be, he's not a dumb or delusional one. Hannibal has the wherewithal to recognize he has never been afflicted by humility.

Nevertheless, Hannibal affably nods, politely dipping his chin, thinking nobody likes a feeble-minded suck-up while saying, "Thank you, Franklyn."

"No, no," Franklyn unfortunately carries on, "*Thank you*," he counters. "You're unlike any alpha I've ever met." He's not wrong about that. "You're so smart," very true, "and gracious," Hannibal does try, "plus you're just so darn thoughtful," *eh*, "and I know how much you care about people." That is a dangerously false assumption. "You make me feel safe."

Hannibal considers the possibility that had he the capacity to pity, Franklyn would likely be a recipient of it. Some omegas weren't meant long for this world, but given modern advances and the lamentable coddling of those deemed inferior, here Franklyn Froideveaux stands, alive and well. What a world.

With eyebrows pinched, Will glances between the good doctor and Franklyn, inquiring, "How do you two know each other?"

"I'm a patient of Doctor Lecter's," Franklyn excitedly babbles, "He's so amazing," his loathsome face reddens as he catches Hannibal's eyes, "You're *so* amazing." He looks back to Will, adding, "If you ever need a listening ear or a judgement free zone, you won't find a better or more prestigious psychiatrist than Doctor Lecter in all of Baltimore, perhaps the whole state," Franklyn's gaze turns contemptuous as it slithers its way over Will's casually dressed form, "But you probably can't afford his rates." ***Rude.***

While Will's smile is handsome in its own right, it's far too genial to be entirely genuine, plus there's a sharpness behind his eyes, a laser focus with a cutting edge that does not escape Hannibal's notice.

Will inhales a steady breath and wets his lips with a dash of a pink tongue, a subconscious bit of movement, then nonchalantly replies, "To be totally honest, Franklyn, I introduced myself to Doctor Lecter in the hopes of getting laid, not psychoanalyzed."

Despite what people might be led to believe, Hannibal's poise and good deportment isn't a natural born gift. It was cultivated to be a brilliant mask of deception, and in the aftermath of Will's words he struggles to hold up the framework. He shifts ever so slightly Will's way, and if his hand were free of his empty wine glass, he'd have tucked them both behind his back, squeezing the knuckles of his left hand into his right. Instead, he grips the stem of his glass dangerously tight.

The expression on Franklyn's unsightly corpulent face is one of shock and distaste, eyes exceptionally wide with outrage. "Doctor Lecter is *not* that kind of alpha."

Will's attention sways from Franklyn and over to Hannibal, their eyes meeting, and *wow*, Hannibal goes under and is left breathless, smothered as he is by that rascally blue-eyed gaze—the color warm like tropical seas, yet turbulent, not with rage but unbridled emotion, an antithesis to Hannibal's own. Where Hannibal's gaze betrays nothing—so little feeling he has inside him—Will's eyes scream with sensitivity and secrets buried like treasure. Hannibal, ever the predator, can never resist a good hunt.

"I think it's about time I excuse myself," Will tells Hannibal.

"Agreed," Franklyn seethes, chocked full of righteous indignation.

Hannibal's vision glides Franklyn's way, and he contents the monster inside himself by envisioning the day—be it ten or twenty or thirty years from now—that he can restrain Franklyn to his stainless-steel table and pry the teeth from that foul mouth, slice out his tongue, and stitch those moist hideous lips closed, never having to hear the crude squawks of him again.

"Hey, Doctor Lecter," Will's voice nudges Hannibal from his reverie, gathering his attention only to find that the young man's eyes have wandered as he searches about the hall, "Any idea who I've got to kill around here to get a drink?"

Hannibal's thoughts falter and his obsidian heart stutters at the delightful sound of his love language being spoken—*murder*. And what a wonderful vision it is to think of a beauty like one Mister Will Graham covered in the blood and entrails of another as he delicately sips a glass of sparkling champagne.

Regrettably, omegas have never been predisposed to violence. That's more of an antiquated alpha trait which Hannibal fully embraces, *but*, and there's always a but, Hannibal sometimes daydreams of the impossible, a part of him even occasionally longs for it—to find a kindred spirit within an omega.

There's a certain appeal to them, Franklyn's present company excluded. Hannibal has always had a keen eye for masculinity, especially the pretty sort. He's aware he could have any woman, young or old, but they've never caught his attention for longer than a brief moment. They've never excited him the way an omega can—either by sight or scent. However, in Hannibal's ample experience, regardless of their allure, omegas have proven time and time again to be of the variety that is better seen and not heard. Their worth not much more than a handsome trinket. Some, like Franklyn Froideveaux, worth not even that.

Hannibal considers Will as he subtly combs his gaze over Will's lithe yet disheveled form. Will is rough around the edges, sure, but as his sights return to Hannibal, his brow raised questioningly, the good doctor can only assume it's all a part of his bewitchery. Will Graham would clean up ever so nicely, be a magnificent statue carved by one of the greats, and yet Hannibal doubts Will would be half as interesting as he is just so.

With just a mere glance, Hannibal knows Will likes dogs and motors and works hard with his hands. With only but a few minutes in his presence Hannibal has come to realize that Will Graham is evidently the cleverest of fishermen because unbeknownst to Hannibal, he'd been caught. He didn't see the lure for what it was, simply bit onto this shiny thing, and now he feels himself pulled near. He doesn't fight the drag, isn't even sure he wants to, and as steps closer he ponders if Will has the skills necessary to both flay and gut him. If Will were able to lay Hannibal bare and bloody and open—and unconscionably vulnerable—what would Will do when he happened upon the monster inside?

Hannibal supposes that if the worst should come to pass, Will Graham's thigh would make a mighty fine braised roast, and since nothing ventured, nothing gained, Hannibal lays a courteous hand over the middle of Will's back, saying, "Allow me to take you to them. Should the need arise, I shall slaughter them myself."

There's something about the way Will's eyes gleam, the way they widen, but only infinitesimally. It reminds Hannibal of a boy trying to hide his obvious excitement. Hannibal quite enjoys their youthful glow.

"I could use a drink," Franklyn abruptly interjects. "I'm parched."

Hannibal swallows the urge to snap his teeth and tear at Franklyn's exposed flesh, and instead civilly remarks, "I heard Alana has been serving a wonderful chardonnay that I'm sure you'd find quite to your liking." Hannibal presses his hand a smidgen more firmly to Will's back, ready to lead him away. "Unfortunately, you'll have to excuse Will and I."

Franklyn's anxious gaze flicks between Hannibal and Will, "I was thinking I could join you two."

Hannibal stiffly inhales a breath through his nose, forcing his jaw not to clench. He blinks, slowly, gathering his wits because he's in the middle of a midlife crisis after all—his patience isn't what it should be. However, fleeting images of Franklyn's broken and lifeless corpse dance behind his eyelids and gives him all the perseverance he needs.

Hannibal intends to reject Franklyn's audacious offer of his unwelcome and abysmal company, but it's Will who pipes up first, rather crudely stating, "I'm not much into

threesomes.”

It’s not something Hannibal would ever contemplate saying, especially not in front of polite company, but it does have the extraordinary effect of turning Franklyn’s obnoxiously blubbery face into a rather peculiar and startling shade of red, of which, Hannibal is rapidly growing intolerant of. He takes the roiling monster within as his cue to exit—lest he make a murderous spectacle of himself—and gently pushes Will into action with the hand centered on his back, bidding Franklyn a good evening.

As they step away, ambling through the hall and past other mingling guests, Will looks to Hannibal with a lively yet decidedly impish gleam in his eyes, saying, “Don’t you ever just wanna—” he mimes a sharp knife slicing through the soft skin of his throat and across the delicate curve of his Adams apple, throwing a glance over his shoulder at a dejected Franklyn who’s busying himself plucking a handful of mini desserts from a waiter’s silver tray.

Under normal circumstances Hannibal would never entertain the company of such a ‘unpolished’ individual like Will Graham, but these are not normal circumstances at all. Will is the kind of beautiful alphas throughout history have started wars over, and while it’s not unlike Hannibal to indulge in beautiful things, he’s never been foolhardy about it.

What truly makes Hannibal weak, however, is that Will has mentioned murder twice now. Frivolous though it may seem, Hannibal doesn’t believe in coincidence—not when it comes to the step-son of the Minnesota Shrike. The good doctor thinks something might be lurking in there, behind those eyes, and although Hannibal doesn’t see a predator, he sees intelligence and potential. He wonders if he were to search long enough, if he’d find understanding too.

With those thoughts in mind, he offers up a slight smile to Will, and says, “I plead the fifth.”

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Thank you so much to those who commented, left kudos, or bookmarked. I was so nervous to post the first chapter. I really felt like I could never do these guys justice. Needless to say, I am shocked that so many people have liked it so far. I hope I can keep on entertaining everyone!!!!

Firelight dances over Will's right side, setting his skin aglow while lustrous shapes in his eyes flicker and flutter in the most hypnotizing way. He sits comfortably on a brown leather high-backed chesterfield armchair, amber whiskey with cubes of ice clinking against crystal as he brings the glass to his lips.

He's framed by a towering arched window behind him, beyond which snowfall chills the night air and paints oak trees white. Thick forest green curtains blanket each side of the window, their natural color suiting everything about Will Graham. It makes Hannibal think of a deadly wilderness and violent rivers and Will not just surviving amongst them, but thriving because of them. He imagines Will devouring what goes bump in the night. What others would scream in terror from, Will sinks his teeth into, letting flesh, blood, and bone nourish his mind, body, and soul.

Hannibal swallows the growing lump in his throat. He can't remember the last time just looking at someone made him feel anything beyond revulsion, annoyance, or a pang of hunger inside his belly, yet now he finds himself fantasizing. He captures Will in his sights, and yes, while Hannibal certainly hungers—the most vicious and monstrous part of himself even screaming for sustenance—it's in a way he has never been fed before. His monster is malnourished, but it's not meat that will sate him.

Despite knowing almost nothing of Will, Hannibal wants this impetuous ineffable beauty to tear off his person suit and look at him in wide-eyed wonder. Where one might see fathomless eyes, leathery skin tarred and burnt, and grisly gnarled antlers, Will with his sparkling blues, his emotional eyes shining like pure crystalline waters, would see resplendence. He'd see Hannibal for *all* he truly is—a god among men, the Chesapeake Ripper, and he'd rejoice in the monster's outstanding magnificence. He'd worship Hannibal, and in turn, Hannibal would bestow him the world and spoil him with benevolence.

Hannibal pauses his thinking and examines those thoughts. He has never questioned his own brilliance, or even his impulses—neither of which having led him astray. However, now he wonders about the clarity of his mind, skewed as it is by Will Graham and undoubtedly the omega's pheromones. At the end of the day and at the very core of him, monster or not, Hannibal is but a flesh and blood alpha, and it senses a potential mate. That is bound to make any alpha at least a little reckless in his aspirations. That being said, Hannibal is nothing if

not the pinnacle of self-control. He's not about to lose his wits over an omega, especially not one that wears dog fur as an accessory and eats food off floors.

There's no harm in looking, though. No harm in stealing a glance here and there, and as Hannibal sits across from Will in a twin chair, one long leg crossed over the other, he delicately sips a rich red wine, letting it pool over his tongue before swallowing—it pairing marvelously with the sight of Will. Hannibal internally muses that the only thing that could make Will's transcendent beauty anymore glorious in this moment were if he had a bloodied knife in hand and a corpse at his feet.

Will, despite moments of being brash, has a keen hawk-eyed vigilance that easily catches Hannibal's appreciative gaze. The smile it births is a decidedly indecent sight despite its wholesome appearance. Will's smile is pressed to the lip of his glass of whiskey, demure eyes looking through darkly curled lashes, and then he chuckles a sound that whispers poetry to Hannibal's soul.

Will tilts his glass, tasting his drink before saying, "You're admiring me."

There are others mulling about the grand room, more of a parlor—a better, more intimate setting for singles to have one on one conversations. They go unnoticed, along with their light chatter, Hannibal entirely focused on Will because he's not just admiring him, he's consuming every little thing he can see about him.

The sharpness of Will's jaw, the strength in his rounded shoulders, even his square ears and their attached lobes peeking through his fluffy curls. Nothing goes unnoticed. Not his cuticles that need moisturizing, or the enticing pulse of his jugular, or the crepe pink of his lips. Hannibal is a glutton in all things, he is *not* about to begin starving himself now, so he looks, and looks, and *looks*.

Hannibal also shamelessly nods in feigned concession, but it's Will who brazenly speaks, "You do know we're not actually going to fuck, right?"

Hannibal blinks, a hairline fracture forming smack-dab in the middle of his ego. While Hannibal's thoughts hadn't travelled to that particular destination, he was under the impression there was a mutual attraction.

"I would never presume—" Will cuts Hannibal off with a wave of his hand, ice rattling around the glass. His intriguing, intelligent eyes slip away from Hannibal as he takes a swig of his whiskey, laying the hand that holds it on an armrest, fingers fiddling with the glass—a mix of twitchy nerves and the need to keep moving.

When Will's gaze returns, Hannibal immediately feels snared in the trap of their delightfully devilish gleam, it creating a stunning contrast with his heavenly face.

"I didn't say I didn't want to," Will clarifies, stealing Hannibal's breath away. Yet, something in Will's confidence wavers. It's barely detectable—imperceptible to most, but Hannibal diligently watches those dangerous eyes, seas of stormy blue, those whirlpools of emotions, and they *flicker*, bothered by an unwelcome intrusion.

Will inhales a stuttered breath as he tap-tap-taps with his index and middle finger on the side of his glass. “I have this really bad habit of letting people get under my skin. Franklyn pissed me off,” Will explains with a nonchalant shrug of his shoulders, “ I wanted to hurt him.” *Wicked, beautiful boy.*

Empathy is not a feeling Hannibal has ever been inconvenienced by, *however*, in this moment, Hannibal can only conclude that this is the closest he’s ever come. And, truth be told, it’s kind of nice to relate to someone. Franklyn truly does inspire one’s wrath. Hannibal can hardly blame Will for sticking the knife of his words into Franklyn’s tender bits. Lord knows, Hannibal would stick sharper things into worse places given only the chance.

Will sighs, more of an aggravated huff, combing his fingers through his wayward curls before gulping down a mouthful of whiskey. “*Fuck*, I don’t know how you do it—your job. I wouldn’t have the patience for it,” Will pauses, musing on a thought and lets out a self-deprecating laugh. His smiling eyes glisten with a captivating maliciousness as he scoots forward in his chair, the toes of his boots nearly meeting those of Hannibal’s Oxfords, and he leans closer to the good doctor, lowering his voice, murmuring, *confessing*, “I’d probably end up bludgeoning Franklyn with a paper weight within the first fifteen minutes.”

Hannibal’s heart thumps in his chest, not with excitement or anticipation, but with crude unadulterated desire that floods his veins, thick and ravenous and devastatingly poisonous. Like an inquisitive yet touch-starved snake, he slides forward in his chair, carelessly letting the toe of his shoe bump against Will’s—a needy and deliberately caged part of himself desperate for the contact.

Hannibal longs to reach out and touch the young man, to feel greatness, but there’s also a thousand questions Hannibal wants to ask him. Would Will enjoy it, the cracking sound of Franklyn’s skull being crushed and the resulting spatter of blood? Would Will exult in the gurgles of Franklyn’s last breaths? Take pride in his death? And what of Franklyn’s body and its disposal? What means would Will use and what lengths would he go to? Does he have an artist’s mind? A carnivore’s appetite?

The dazzling malicious gleam fades from Will’s eyes as they fall downcast, and he sighs again, solemn this time. He finishes off his drink, ice sliding around the inside of the crystal glass as he discards it on the floor by the side of his chair, muttering, “I shouldn’t say stuff like that.” He glances back to Hannibal, expression besmirched with guilt. “Franklyn doesn’t deserve that. I *know* he doesn’t deserve that.”

Will’s vision wanders to the crackling fire, an intricate stone mantle surrounding it. He makes a striking, breathtaking picture. His pensive expression is illuminated by the orangey glow of the flames which cast ethereal shadows over his remarkably beautiful face.

Will’s hands shift against his denim clad lap, pressing his palms together, interlocking his fingers as his straight, white like mother of pearl, front teeth bite into his bottom lip. He appears as if he’s fighting an internal battle of wills, attempting to stifle curious words that want to flit from his endearingly provocative mouth.

He loses that battle, “I’d bet my two kidneys and even my liver—” A delicious thought, *indeed*, “—that Franklyn prays before bed every night to inspire the devotion of an alpha.

He's so desperate for love he sees fragments of it even where it isn't. He looks at you and all your," Will jerks his head the good doctor's way, his scouring eyes none too gently raking over Hannibal's extravagant form, "*razzle dazzle* as if you're the answer to his prayers. The thing is, he's so fucking terrified of rejection that he *rejects* rejection to extent that he's torn out his eyes and is looking at you through gaping bloody heart-shaped sockets. He can't see the forest for the trees."

Where a lesser alpha would find himself squeamish, Hannibal has a childlike giddiness building up inside himself because, *yes*, Will Graham is precisely the thing sinful dreams and iniquitous seraphs are made of, and what a darling is he.

Will's vibrant eyes are glued to the burgundy-brown of Hannibal's, searching for a flinch, a sign of discomfort, of morals pinched, and when he finds only keen interest, a petite smile adorns his lips and his eyes abashedly fall. They pause where their toes touch, and for a brief moment, Hannibal grieves their certain departure. It would, however, be just like Will to do the unexpected and press his foot forward, sliding it tightly in between Hannibal's two, their knees nearly knocking.

Will's eyes are a kaleidoscope of emotion as they flick upwards and onto Hannibal himself. Will leans even closer, and then, with all the puckish confidence in the world, Will reaches out, snatching the wine from Hannibal's grasp. He holds it by the bowl like some sort of charmingly rude ape and takes a swig. His adorable nose wrinkles at the taste of it, clearly not his ideal flavor. That doesn't stop him from putting the glass to his mouth for a second time and swallowing the rest.

As Will places the glass down beside his own on the floor, Hannibal can't resist asking, "Do you see the trees, Will?"

Will disinterestedly shrugs, although his lovely, shrewd eyes lock onto Hannibal's. Will reaches out, Hannibal eagerly welcoming the touch as the young man brushes a few roughened fingers over the forearm of Hannibal's suit jacket, tracing a red square of the windowpane plaid while claiming, "Humble men don't dress like modern kings."

A ghost of smile caresses the corners of Hannibal's lips as he replies, "I am not a king."

No, as far as Hannibal is concerned, the majesty he is beholden to far eclipses that of any king. He knows perfectly well how extraordinary he is. He also knows that any king standing in the shadow of his splendor would seem as if they were the curdled slop fed to peasants.

Will's lively eyes sharpen. "Nor are you humble," he emphatically states. From any other person, Hannibal might expect scorn along with such a proclamation. However, Will just smiles an immaculate, pretty thing, and tells the good doctor, "But that's okay, I wouldn't expect humility from a peacock. I wouldn't even like it."

Hannibal can't help but indulge himself. He lifts a hand and delicately places it over where Will's touch lingers on his sleeve, curling his hand around Will's, soaking in his warmth, relishing the comfort of life within him. Will's attention drifts to where they connect, expression unreadable, and then Hannibal finds rapturous delight bursting like atomic bombs in his chest as Will turns his hand over in Hannibal's, clasping their two together.

Hannibal is *not* an emotional man, but currently he finds himself overcome, particularly by hope. Something of which he's never needed, nor wanted for in the past. He's always been the creator of his own destiny, a path he thought himself content to travel alone, and a part of him still is, but now as he openly stares at the wondrous, enchanting, foul-mouthed Will Graham, he can think of a better future.

One with an audacious and dashing husband, and a stately home with a garden to rival Eden. Hannibal envisions a dozen gorgeous headstrong children with hyper-intelligent minds. Tutors for languages, sciences, and all the arts—each child reaching excellence in his or her own way. Then come the setting sun, Hannibal, his husband, and all their children would gather around the dinner table and together, as a one big family, they'd feast on swine.

Will gives Hannibal's fingers a squeeze, amusedly stating, "The way you're looking at me is *exactly* why we shouldn't fuck." Their eyes catch, and Will gives him an oddly pitying half smile-half frown. "You're just gonna fall in love with me, Doctor Lecter." Will's vision wanders to the pristine lapel of Hannibal's suit. He reaches out with his free hand, carefully running his touch along the blend of wools, admiring the fabric while casually mentioning, "The bigger, and stronger, and tougher the alpha, the harder they fall." Will's expressive eyes flick upwards, a heavy warning behind them, "You'd go absolutely rabid with your love for me, and the last thing I want to do—" Will tugs at the lapel of Hannibal's jacket, "—Is ruin a pretty suit like this by having to take you out back and put you down 'Old Yeller' style."

Even in the face of yet another rejection, Hannibal still finds himself increasingly enamored by the omega with his spellbinding eyes and his perceptive observations. Hannibal also gets the distinct feeling he's already facing rabidity, because Lord have mercy, he wishes for little more than to have Will lead him out back and *try*.

"Is that your way of telling me I'm not your type?" Hannibal pleasantly queries.

The laughter Will responds with is exquisite, eyes crinkled in their mirth, merry like Christmas in the firelight. Unfortunately, he pulls his hand away from Hannibal's own, but his words are, at least, in part reassuring, vulgar as they may be, "No, you dumb ass! I'm not *your* type. Look at you," he motions wildly at Hannibal, even goes as far as to scent the air, "You even *smell* expensive. I bet I smell—"

"Nothing short of divine, I assure you," Hannibal quickly interjects, cutting off what was doubtlessly going to be disparaging talk. While the stench of dog and motor oil lingers on the fibers of Will's clothes, it's easily dismissible by the motes of Will buoyantly afloat in the air. He's all autumn and the crackle of fallen leaves, damp fertile soil and the sway of old growth evergreens.

The compliment strikes Will like an affectionate slap. He flops back in his chair, rosy cheeks rivalling the pleasing pink of cherry blossoms. He groans in lighthearted exasperation, scrubbing those hardworking, masculine hands over his face, and grumbles, "You can't say shit like that."

Despite Will's objection, he peeks through the curtain of his fingers with a small yet precious smile, and for the very first time Hannibal thinks he gleams sight of the shy tantalizing omega within him. Even Hannibal's monster finds itself smitten. It salivates at the mouth as it

hungers to curl its emaciated form around Will, smothering and strangling the omega with its appreciation while it eats Will's company alive, fattening itself on Will's presence alone.

Will must see something behind Hannibal's aloof gaze because his smile broadens into a silly grin and with a swift flick of his fingers, Will flips Hannibal the bird, giving him an audaciously loud, albeit playful 'fuck you' with his middle finger.

So... perhaps not that shy after all.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

Sorry about the wait! I get very little free time to write. Rest assured, though, I have so many plans for these murderous boys!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Will looks pleasantly adorable bundled in an old beaten-up jean jacket with Sherpa lining. He snaps the buttons closed over his belly and tugs a black beanie onto his head, sliding it down over his ears, wisps of his pretty curls tickling the soft skin of his delectable neck.

Hannibal shamelessly watches with rapt attention as Will haphazardly tangles a slate grey wool scarf around those enticingly delicate lines and curves of his neck, tucking the subtle throb of his jugular out of sight. Will even picks a few stray pieces of dog fur from the fuzzy material as he goes along, carelessly flicking the strands to the marble floor.

It's then, right when Hannibal is smack dab in the middle of fantasy come to fruition, that suddenly, Will's brilliantly blue, sparkly eyed gaze shifts from the scarf to Hannibal himself, catching the good doctor's keen observance.

In the low light, Will's effusive little smile is blinding, his cheeks pinkening with delight. Will bites his bottom lip to quell his growing grin before it blooms into something positively impish. Hannibal can see the buds, the gradual unfurling of its elegantly toxic petals. Will snips them right off as he slips his hands into the pockets of his jacket, keys clinking, strong fingers fiddling with a set of them.

"Thank you for keeping me company tonight, Doctor Lector," Will says, perfunctory, but polite. He wets his lips, hands still fidgeting in their respective pockets, and despite having cut off his smile, it returns much like the Hydra of Lerna, bigger and broader, double its previous size. It's playful and gorgeous as Will teases, "I hope you don't keep yourself awake at night thinking about me."

Hannibal matches Will's smile with a humored smirk of his own. Normally, Hannibal would find an omega with such brash confidence distasteful, even ugly, at least in mind, but he'd also never met an omega remotely like his dear Will Graham.

Just standing here in a nigh empty cloakroom—most of the patrons and staff having left—clothed in denim and a wonderous smile, Will's beauty is impeccable, and although his brain goes unseen, Hannibal has no doubt it's as glorious as the structure that cradles it. Will has every right to be confident, for even deities and demi-gods alike would look upon him in envy.

Lacking absolutely no confidence of his own, Hannibal reaches into his suit jacket to retrieve his business card, and as he passes it over, he unabashedly flirts, saying, “Should you have any desire to alleviate my duress.”

Will’s eyes lower to the card he reluctantly holds. The paper is thick, the black color of which is darker than night—so black in fact, it almost swallows light whole. Hannibal can’t help the little twinge in his equally black heart as Will traces a perfect thumb over the embossed golden lettering of Hannibal’s name. Will’s playful smile becoming something much more tender, softer, smaller.

Will flicks those radiant, engulfing, breath stealing pools of blue onto Hannibal, their luscious lashes like a forest of sturdy coniferous trees surrounding a man-killing oasis, and he casually remarks, “It’s cute how ostentatious you are.”

Had anyone else called Hannibal cute or ostentatious, the good doctor would have taken offense. As it were, his big black heart swells like the ocean—an imminent romantic storm, a rise of Poseidon’s most precious and possessive wave. If Hannibal doesn’t drown in Will’s eyes, he’ll surely drown in his own adoration for him.

“You’re doing it again,” Will muses. “You’re looking at me like I hung the moon.”

Hannibal isn’t entirely sure he didn’t. “Perhaps you did.”

Will has this way about him. He’s bashful when complimented, yet not disbelieving. He humbly knows his own worth which paints a timidly excited smile over his lovely blush pink lips.

“I think that’s something I’d remember doing,” Will lightheartedly replies.

“Another life then, many millennia ago.”

The grin Will gifts Hannibal is so exceptionally handsome it becomes fantastical, it hardly seeming real—*Will* hardly seeming real. It’s his eyes, though, always his eyes. Despite his youth they crinkle in the corners, and the glittery cerulean blue of them brim, not with tears, but unstifled, unregulated, pure emotion. Hannibal can’t begin to fathom what it’s like to feel so purely.

While Hannibal does feel, it’s muted—a gentle poke where others would feel skewered—and the thing he feels most as of late is unrelenting apathy. He’s grown tired and bored of everyday life, his general disinterest in the things that used to bring him amusement—operas, art galleries, and dinner parties—has become... not necessarily concerning, but inconvenient.

There’s been nothing to distract the monster, and he’s recently been, perchance, a smidgen overzealous with his displays, not keeping to his usual sounders of three. While Hannibal is surely a glutton in almost every facet and has been known to indulge, he’s never been one to gorge himself. However, with boredom comes irritability, and irritability breeds lack of control.

Hannibal prides himself on his control, but he's having a midlife crisis, remember? He's recently had bouts of instability, giving into urges, impulses, and desires that before, he'd have thoroughly mapped out and potentially ignored altogether. The thing is, Hannibal and his monster revel in feeling—they chase it, hunt it, always searching for more and more, yet only finding less and less.

However, killing makes Hannibal *feel*. Creating art makes him *feel*. Currently, Will Graham makes him *feel*, and it's like nothing he's ever felt before.

Will Graham has Hannibal's insides tingling with warmth, an excitement thrumming through him, turning his stiff core into something much more malleable. A startling comparison from his normal stubborn rigidity and frigid temperature. How Will has managed to rescue Hannibal's heart from the icy depths of his chest, defrosting the organ with charm and beauty alone, is beyond him. It's with his own demise in mind, that Hannibal watches Will use just that wondrous smile and those emotional eyes to cut right through the middle of it, leaving his gruesome heart open and raw.

It doesn't surprise Hannibal that Alana Bloom chooses this quiet, intimate moment to interrupt—the clack of her heels sounding her approach moments before she barges through the cloakroom door. It does, however, vex him. While she is one of the very select few Hannibal has a modicum of respect for, her unwelcome presence instantly smothers the flames Will had impressively been using to warm him. It also disappeared Will's smile and has him shoving Hannibal's business card into the pocket of his jeans like it were some illicit object to be hidden, effectively crumpling it.

Alana pretends like she doesn't notice Will's chagrined expression and flighty movements, and smiles at the both of them as she approaches. It's meant to look amicable, but Hannibal knows her better than that. Inconspicuous though it may be, her disapproval is written all over her feminine face. Hannibal suspects she's come to speak her mind about the company he's been keeping this evening, and while bold of her to presume her opinion is of any worth, Hannibal has always had something of an affinity for bold pretty things with even prettier brains.

Alana's smart, cunning even, especially for a beta. Unfortunately, her favorable qualities are squashed by her virtue and hefty moral compass—two putrid stains that destroy an otherwise beautiful work of art. And she *is* beautiful. The porcelain skin, the painted red lips, and the cascade of her silky hair, the color of East Indian rosewood. It's no wonder Hannibal had taken to her once upon a time.

Alana's smile turns genuine when her dull—in comparison to Will's—powder blue eyes come to find Hannibal's. They dilate, and her cheeks fill with a pleasing ruddy color, although it's Will who steals Hannibal's focus as his scrupulous gaze shifts between Hannibal and Alana, an indecipherable frown tugging at the corners of his mouth. Will's attention comes to idle on her, his expression becoming pinched and sour, eyes so cold Hannibal can feel their chill.

“Alana,” Will greets, his tone impertinent, his frown an outright scowl. “Here to tell me it's past my bed time?”

Hannibal swivels his vision Alana's way, shoulder's moving a fraction of an inch. What an interesting turn of events. These two are already acquainted, and Will *really* doesn't like Alana Bloom when *everybody* likes Alana Bloom. Curiosity may have killed the cat, but it's what Hannibal *lives* for... *that*, and a good, hearty, home cooked meal.

Alana keeps her expression painstakingly neutral. "Jack called me," she explains, which judging by an infinitesimal flinch of Will's entire being, only serves to poke at an exposed nerve. "He said you haven't been answering your phone."

Will steels himself, unconcernedly shrugging his denim clad shoulders, and as he says, "I figured he'd send the calvary if it were important," he sticks his hands back into the pockets of his jacket to hideaway the clench of them.

Alana's face hardens with displeasure, gaze severe. "*Will*," she chides, much like a mother would an insolent child, "Jack is worried."

Will rolls his eyes like said insolent child. "He's *impatient*. There's a stark difference."

Alana's eyes narrow and she takes a step forward, the pointed heel of her sleek black Louis Vuitton's lightly clacking against the marble floor. She leans into Will's personal space and *rudely* inhales the air around him.

"You've been drinking," she critically surmises. "You know you're not supposed to drink."

Will's keys clink together as he squeezes them, defensively inquiring, "Because I'm an omega?"

Alana huffs. The tilt of her lips and the droop of her eyebrows reads of guilt and agreeance, yet she haughtily retorts, "Because you're *twenty*." Her attention shifts to Hannibal. "Did he tell you he can't legally drink?"

With her attention comes Will's, heavy and intrusive spear like eyes that stab bloody holes into Hannibal just to get a better look at him. Hannibal smiles a little thing that's supposed to help pacify Alana, but he imagines—*hopes*—Will can decipher what lies beneath, a smitten monster that likes the tickle of being poked and prodded and *bloodied* by Will's omegan eyes.

"No harm no foul," Hannibal says. He should be mollifying Alana, but he finds the only person he as any desire to appease is Will. "We're all adults here."

Will doesn't smile or grin, but the satisfaction radiating off of him as he turns his gaze to Alana is palpable. "Hannibal let me steal a sip of his wine." *Hannibal*, not Doctor Lecter, the familiarity doesn't escape Hannibal, nor does it Alana judging by the furrow of her brow, "It was wonderful. You put together the menu for this evening, right?" He's speaking to Alana, yet his eyes drift Hannibal's way again, and at the same time his hands emerge from the pockets they were sequestered away in. Will sidles next to the good doctor, casually coiling one arm around Hannibal's, the hand belonging to his other arm rising to possessively splay over the side of an elegant bicep.

Now Will grins, sunflower bright, and returns his attention to Alana. “You’ve always had such good taste.”

Will isn’t talking about the wine, that much is obvious with the delicious warmth of him soaking into Hannibal’s side. Hannibal is aware that Will’s affection is only a ruse meant to agitate Alana, Hannibal not much more than a prop in this scenario, *but*, beggars can’t be choosers. This close to Will, Hannibal can smell the cheap perfumy scent of his store-bought shampoo, along with the bar soap he uses to scrub his pretty skin. However, it’s the sweet, earthy notes of Will that linger beneath it all that makes Hannibal struggle to keep his composure. The monster in him, the *alpha*, wants nothing more than to turn in his spot, bury his nose into the crook of the Will’s neck, and dig his teeth into flesh and muscle.

Alana’s posture stiffens, stricken with barely concealed offense at Will’s words. Her lips nearly purse, but she smooths them into a grim line. “You’re drunk, Will.” She glances at Hannibal. “He’s *drunk*.” Will isn’t drunk, not even tipsy, but his lovely, dear Will Graham doesn’t need Hannibal speaking for him. He’s admirably *not* that kind of omega.

When Alana receives no response from Hannibal, she sets her sights back on Will. “You should give me your keys. You’re in no state to drive. I’ll call a cab for you.”

Will squeezes Hannibal’s arm a bit tighter, leans further into him. His smile is amiable and his words are disguised as friendly, “That’s kind of you, but Hannibal has already offered me a ride,” he turns his head, twinkling eyes catching Hannibal’s, “He’s such a gentleman.”

It should disturb Hannibal how much that faux praise affects him, especially how it makes the monster within him purr. As it were, he merely luxuriates in the fact that he has a gorgeous omega willing and eager to play pretend. After all, Hannibal does so enjoy putting on a show.

Alana looks to Hannibal, a mix of concern and a fleeting sense of betrayal washing over her features. It lasts only a moment before she fixes a slightly more flattering expression onto her face.

She limply smiles at Hannibal, saying, “That’s hardly appropriate.” Neither is cannibalizing the rude, yet here stands The Chesapeake Ripper. “*Hannibal*,” she drawls, trying to reason with him, “I don’t think it’s a good idea given that Will’s—”

“An omega?” Will interjects, which judging by Alana’s disgruntled little sigh was not an inaccurate summary of her train of thought.

“*Unstable*,” She deflects. “Either way, it would be improper for you to be alone in the company of an unmated alpha.”

Will’s hand, the one that rests on the side of Hannibal’s upper arm, bunches the woolen fabric into a tightly fistful hand. “I can control myself.”

“History would state otherwise.”

Hannibal knows intimately the manner in which Will's eyes viciously gleam. It doesn't last, blink and you'd miss it—gone before it was ever really there at all. But like a shark smelling blood in the water, Hannibal can spot danger a mile away, is often it himself, and *Will*—oh, his darling, beautiful Will, he *is* dangerous.

“Given the circumstances, Alana,” Hannibal says, aiming for congeniality and perhaps a bit of concealed humor, if only for his own personal entertainment, “There's no one I'd trust more than myself to see that Will gets home in one piece.”

With eyes that glimmer with thinly veiled darkened mischief, Will smiles a beatific thing that he beams up at Hannibal as his fingers flatten over the good doctor's arm, releasing the fabric. Those masculine digits smooth out the wrinkles, then slide their way down a straight line of window pane plaid. They veer off course as they lightly brush over Hannibal's forearm, going even lower to tickle the skin of his wrist. Hannibal forgets how to breathe as they press into his stronger hand, curling all around him, clasping him close, skin on skin.

“I'll drive Will home.” Hannibal barely registers Alana's voice, so focused as he is on where his and Will's bodies meet and the touch of Will—rough and woodsy—seeping through his skin.

“I'd rather walk.”

“Don't be ridiculous, Will. You could get yourself killed.”

“Yet, still preferable to spending an hour alone in a car with *you*.”

“*Will!*” Alana's indignant, shrieky, squawk of a gasp has Hannibal jerking back to proper consciousness. “I'm trying to *help* him,” she says to Hannibal, and pleads, “Help me, help him.”

Pleading has never gotten anyone anywhere with Hannibal except for a slow and untimely demise, and in this moment, with Alana attempting to steal Will away from him, she is looking a whole lot more like food than friend. Her neck appearing exceptionally squeezable, which leads Hannibal to wonder if her ruby red lips would look just as pretty colored with the hazy greyish blue mark of death.

Still, Hannibal errs on the side of caution, remaining civil, using his words, not his actions, saying, “With all due respect, Alana, I don't believe Will is in any need of your help.”

Will tightens his grip on Hannibal's hand, it feeling an awful lot like a thank you, and a far too much like Hannibal's own personal salvation—a light at the end of a long and grisly tunnel.

“I'm tired,” Will says. “I just want to go home.” He looks up Hannibal with wide innocent eyes that Hannibal is beginning to think aren't innocent at all. “Please take me home.”

Hannibal meets Alana's gaze. She's stewing in silent outrage, but she no longer speaks any objection. That settles it then. Hannibal gathers his coat and leads Will away.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading! I hope you enjoyed!

Chapter 4

Freshly fallen snow has a way of making the world seem quiet and soft. It's a peaceful blanket of crystalline ice that paints the earth pretty, can even turn city streets and parking lots into something majestic. It's a shame its beauty is so easily besmirched by footprints, salt, and warmer temperatures.

However, Will's prints do not besmirch. They tell a tale. Hannibal finds himself lost in it as he lags behind Will, following his footsteps—a visual snippet of Will's life story—step for step through a mostly empty parking lot, an old stone building standing grandiose behind them.

It's under the golden glow of an antique streetlamp that Will turns around, clunky steel toed boots crunching in the snow, his perfect hands hidden away in the pockets of his coat to protect them from mother nature's chill. Flakes of snow flutter and dance around him, some landing on his shoulders and beanie, along with the curled tips of his hair. He smiles knowingly at Hannibal, well aware that the good doctor is admiring him—has done little else this entire evening.

Will has to know what a striking vision he makes, and how he affects Hannibal, because it's in this moment Will chooses to close his eyes and tip his head back, feeling the snow brush and tickle his handsome, heavenly face. The condensation from his breath rises above him, dissipating along the way, while a little flake—a shape the world has never seen, nor will again—melts upon his cheek as two others find themselves graciously snared in his lovely eyelashes.

Hannibal observes from a close distance a few yards away, unwilling to disrupt the brittle silence and cease Will's relaxed composure because right now, Will is the kind of beautiful even angels weep over. If there were pooling blood in the snow and a warm heart in Will's hand, reminiscent of Hannibal's own, the omega would be godly. They angels wouldn't weep in wonder, they'd kneel and bow, bestowing their fealty at the toes of Will Graham's boots.

Hannibal's musings are interrupted. As it turns out, he need not concern himself with destroying the intimate quiet because it's Will who breaks the silence, appearing ever the ethereal being as he inquires, "Did you fuck Alana?"

Hannibal shouldn't be as surprised as he is by Will's shamelessly lewd choice of words, yet he finds himself humbled. "Are you jealous, Will?" Hannibal questions. So, not *that* humbled.

Will's snorts out an amused laugh, eyes flashing open, darting Hannibal's way. "It's just..." he pauses, giving Hannibal a wry, considering look, "I pegged you for a man with high standards, is all." Hannibal's eyebrows rise, surprised once more, this time by Will's charming audacity, especially as the omega adds, "Pardon me for being disappointed."

"She's beautiful," Hannibal counters just to see how Will might react.

Will smiles a wicked thing, small yet viciously pointed. “She’s intrusive,” Will states as he meanders toward Hannibal, “and *boring*. I’d bet my left leg—fuck, let’s up the stakes, I’ll throw in my right one as well—that the vanilla, passionless sex you had with her, *bored* you.”

While Hannibal indubitably covets those legs, can think of many a meal to make with them, it’s also a bet the good doctor would lose, and with that thought frolicking around his brain, he returns Will’s smile with a soft one of his own as he cordially responds, “I assure you, the sex was perfectly adequate.”

Will lets out a bark of laughter, eyes aglow with righteous mirth. He steps closer to Hannibal, their breaths one in the same as the clouded air drifts around them, and he leans in, saying, “If someone I slept with ever told me the sex was ‘perfectly adequate,’” Will adorably uses air quotations to accentuate his point, “I’d *eat* them for breakfast.”

For a third time in as many minutes, Hannibal finds himself taken by surprise, and truth be told, he couldn’t possibly be any more thrilled by it. His heart sings, the blood in his veins trilling with unadulterated joy—a feeling Hannibal is not predisposed to. Not even Mischa, his long deceased, darling baby sister, could speak and make Hannibal feel happy. Contentment, sure. Possessiveness, always. But, happy? Joy? This is new, and it is *priceless*.

Hannibal nods, smiles brighter than he thinks he ever has. It yet remains small, but it is true, all monster’s teeth and guilty pleasures. “Some of my most productive days have been started with a protein scramble,” Hannibal says, poised and calm, although on the inside, his heart thunders like a herd of galloping horses—excited and wild.

Will bites his bottom lip as he tries to contain his grin. Fortunately, fate favors Hannibal, and Will miserably fails, and his grin grows wild and reckless like the feeling inside Hannibal’s chest. “Oh yeah?” Will teases, curious eyes boring into Hannibal’s own, flooding the alpha with endorphins that stir his brain into something that closely resembles *pudding*, “Tell me, Doctor Lecter, how many people have *you* eaten?”

Hannibal decides to play along, if only for the fact that he’s not playing at all, and answers a little too honestly, “Dozens, so many I’ve lost count.”

Will’s eyes widen with excitement. “Jilted lovers, I presume?”

Hannibal needs a life preserver because he can’t help himself. “Only if they were rude.”

Will’s grin blossoms into something resoundingly feral, all bloodthirsty petals and savage thorns. “So, when do we eat Alana?”

Never, not once, has Hannibal felt so stricken with blissful, joyous, delight that he finds himself speechless. He glances over his shoulder at the building, warm light softly illuminating the cathedral windows, and he vividly pictures it—stalking Alana through those opulent halls, herding her outside into the freshly fallen snow where Will lies in wait. She’d run, of course, they always do, but—Hannibal looks back to Will—she’s in only a dress and heels, whereas his darling Will appears as if he could run effortlessly for *miles*.

Hannibal has never been one for voyeurism or living vicariously through others, yet he can't conjure a thought, can't think of any single pleasure that would please him more than watching Will find immense satisfaction, bliss even, in taking the life of another.

Where Will might lack in finesse and theatrics, perhaps he'd make up for it in sheer brutality. He wouldn't peel back someone's layers into the grisly shape of a rose, though he might be the type to smash kneecaps when his anger gets the better of him. He'd tackle Alana from behind, flipping her over, straddling her petite waist, and although Will might be an omega, his strength is nothing to be trifled with.

Alana's flailing limbs and the scratch of her painted nails would do nothing to stop Will from digging his thumbs into her eyes, pressing his prints into the back of her sockets, the curve of bone cradling those digits like the fine specimens they are.

Blind and with frostbitten toes, he'd make her run again. Will isn't the sort to catcall or harass. He wouldn't taunt her with threats of her assured demise. He'd follow silently, cat like, as she crashed into trees, broke toes on rocks, and slipped in snow, her blood staining it the prettiest of reds.

There would come a moment where after some time she'd wonder if Will had given up chase. She'd slow her movements, her body so cold her panting breath wouldn't cloud the air even the faintest puffs of white, yet hope of her survival would fall upon her and she'd wonder if she'd gotten free.

It's *then* Will would pounce.

Will nudges Hannibal, just a light brushing of his knuckles on the back of Hannibal's hand, softly remarking, "You're imagining killing her."

It has to be mere speculation on Will's part, it's made with dazzling conviction and absolutely no judgement, but still, Hannibal means to deny the accusation—albeit an astonishingly accurate one.

However, Will reaches out, giving the good doctor's shoulder a friendly, enthusiastic thump with his fist as he says, "Don't worry, I think everybody has at some point or another."

Will's nose is getting pink from the cold, and he has that boyish innocence about him again as he curls an arm around Hannibal's own. He smiles a pretty, delicate thing up at Hannibal—like a lotus made of glass. Doctor Hannibal Lecter isn't normally the kind of man to get sentimental or make wishes, but there's nothing normal about Will Graham, so Hannibal finds himself feeling exceptionally saccharine while he wishes that Will's smile was the sort of something he could put in his pocket and keep forever.

Hannibal gestures near the entrance of the lot where his car is parked and leads Will toward it, their shoes softly crunching through the snow. For lack of better things to say, Hannibal states the obvious, "You don't like Alana."

Will's grip tightens, practically hugging Hannibal's arm to himself as he bitterly huffs, "She thinks I'm deranged."

The left corner of Hannibal's mouth crooks in amusement. "I believe her exact wording was *unstable*."

Will frowns. "I know what she said and I know what she meant."

Hannibal guides Will around the side of his Bentley—black, sleek and entirely covered in snow. "Do you believe yourself to be deranged, Will?"

They pause near the passenger side door, Will letting go, turning to face Hannibal directly. "That entirely depends upon your definition of deranged, Doctor Lecter."

"Unable to think or act in a normal or logical way."

Will's brow furrows as he hums in consideration, sprightly, sportive eyes trained on Hannibal, "*Well*, when you put it like that..."

Hannibal gathers his keys from the pocket of his peacoat, shamelessly flirting while also confessing, "If it's any consolation, I'm quite deranged myself."

"You must be. You slept with Alana, after all." From any other person, Hannibal would find a comment like this quite unbecoming, but Will has a way of pressing all the wrong buttons and making them seem right.

Hannibal's fingers often itch for a scalpel, yet currently they just itch for touch, to brush his thumb over pretty lips, or the handsome curve of the omega's brow, even the curled tips of his hair. Hannibal yearns to slip his hand under the folds of Will's scarf, absorbing the warmth from Will's supple neck as he wraps his fingers around it, *squeezing*, not to take Will's life, but just to feel it thrum.

Hannibal faintly smiles, it's devilish, yet entirely too fond, and though Hannibal means to hide it, it slips through the façade as he muses, "What a petty boy you are, Will."

While Hannibal might be hesitant with giving his own touch, Will is blessedly not so reserved, he steps—a half step, really—close to Hannibal as his fingers fiddle with the middle button of Hannibal's coat. He does it with an itty bitty, playful smirk and blue eyes avidly watchful, retorting, "Says the cannibal who eats the rude."

If Hannibal were to survive it, he thinks he might be tempted to claw through his own chest, scrape away flesh and muscle, crack open his sternum with blunt fists, and savagely rip out his own heart, just to get down on one knee and present it to the omega, because truly, Will owns it anyway, so he might as well have it.

Hannibal's heart seems to like the thought, it even tries to escape on its own accord, to uselessly leap—tethered by arteries and caged by bone—toward Will over and over as the omega's hands travel upwards, one splaying over Hannibal's chest while the other traces the length of a lapel.

"You've probably noticed," Will says, hesitating, "but um," his eyes drop to his ministrations, observing his own fingers move, and he smiles to himself, soft and sweet, "I uh," he gathers

his wits, gaze sliding its way up Hannibal's chest, darkening as it scours the fine contours of Hannibal's neck, pinpointing his jugular, and as it continues upwards it turns downright hungry as it restlessly pauses over elegant lips, "I can also be a *very* rude boy."

Will forces his vision a smidgen higher, making purposeful eye contact. "Do you want to eat me, too, Doctor Lecter?"

Since honesty is the best policy and it hasn't failed him yet with Will, Hannibal answers with the truth, something he so rarely gets to speak, "In more ways than one."

The warmth of Will's touch is startling and gentle, roughened fingers sweeping over the side of Hannibal's neck, just below the ear. It doesn't make Hannibal flinch or jolt, though it has him sucking in a breath of frosty air that's tinged with the divine scent of *Will*.

Will's so handsome like this—his eyes, hypnotizing, swirling, lively ocean pools of blue that both smother and drown Hannibal with their intensity, while his strong hands are learning and searching, giving and receiving comfort as snow dots his beanie and denim clad shoulders. Hannibal has never witnessed a miracle, but he thinks he might be right now, because something about Will Graham feels utterly miraculous.

Will presses his palm to flesh, a part of his hand overlapping the collar of Hannibal's dress shirt and coat as his dexterous fingers reach Hannibal's fine, ashy brown hair near the back of Hannibal's neck.

Will wets his lips—a subconscious nervous little tick, perhaps. "If Alana is right about me being deranged, maybe she's right about my self-control, too, because I really, *really*, want you to taste me." Will's fingers tense, and Hannibal feels the slight dig of them. "I have since the moment I saw you across the room being accosted by Franklyn."

Hannibal, surer now that his touch will be well received, pockets his keys and grips one of Will's hips as if a lifeline, like an anchor, since the good doctor is feeling particularly unmoored. "I'm glad you decided to save me," Hannibal says, appreciative.

Will laughs, "It wasn't *you* I was trying to save. You're no damsel, Doctor Lecter."

Hannibal can't keep from smiling, or from raising his other hand and placing it over the denim of Will's waist, guiding him so close their knees knock and bellies touch, saying, "Nevertheless, you'd make a mighty fine knight."

Will sighs with a playful roll of his eyes, fingers twiddling with the short strands of Hannibal's hair. "An omega can't be a knight."

Hannibal lightly squeezes Will's hip. "A shame because I'm certain you could slay all sorts of dragons."

Something about Will's demeanor changes. It's so slight, one might almost write it off as insignificant, but Hannibal is nothing if not meticulous, whether it be in regard to meals, murder, or simple observation. Plus, Hannibal doesn't believe there is anything insignificant about Will Graham.

So, he notices how Will's face softens, *feels* his touch turn reverent as he leans incrementally closer, breath ghosting across Hannibal's lips when he says, "Usually alphas have fantasies about saving me from those sorts of things."

"Banal troglodytes," Hannibal murmurs, making Will chuckle, pretty blue eyes sparkling with fondness and glee, both of which make the monster in Hannibal feel a ferocious bout of desire. It wants to dig its claws into Will, bury them in deep, feel him from the inside out, and *never* let go.

Will moves his hands, the two of them gliding over Hannibal's cheeks, cupping either side of his face—it feeling so perfect, so much like home, that Hannibal imagines it's exactly what it'd feel like to be cradled in a palm belonging to God, creator of the universe, himself. Gazing into Will's kind eyes is a religious experience in and of itself because it sure does seem like Will holds all the answers—knows each and every one of Hannibal's deep, dark secrets. Will doesn't know the half it, not even a quarter. He couldn't possibly, but it's easy to fathom a world in which he did. Even easier to pine for it.

When Will's lips are just a hairsbreadth away from Hannibal's own, the good doctor squeezes the omegas waist, too tight this time to be considered friendly, warning him, "If you kiss me, you're going to have to take me out back and shoot me sooner rather than later."

Will doesn't balk, he doesn't dither or stumble, he doesn't even waffle, if anything Hannibal's words encourage him. He rises on his toes to get a better angle, grinning that magnificent, too-beautiful-for-this-world grin of his, and kisses Hannibal with it.

Chapter 5

There's a moment, right when the kiss happens, where it doesn't feel real. It doesn't even feel possible. Hannibal has always been firmly grounded in reality, has never dissociated or been prone to delusion beyond his own grandeur, yet he finds himself floating, lost in his senses and the feel of Will Graham *everywhere*.

Will's boots—soles clumped with snow—bump against Hannibal's Oxfords, the length of his legs pressed close, the heat of his thighs burning with hallowed fire, scorching its way through the finely blended wool of Hannibal's dress pants, while slim, sublime hips nudge against Hannibal's. There are far too many layers between their bellies and chest to feel Will's warmth, but Hannibal still cherishes the weight of him—a heavenly blanket of mate and *mine*.

And then there's those hands, strong and masculine, touch adoring, cradling Hannibal's face like they relish the feel of such an impressive alpha, of such a perfect man, of a glorious monster—tar skin, antlers and all. But, it's Will's lips that Hannibal couldn't have ever possibly prepared himself for. There's conjuring it in his mind's eye, imagining the press of them against his own, and then there's *living* it—breathing in Will's breath, feeling the paper thin, petal soft, graceless kiss of grinning lips. There's a clink of teeth, the scrape of stubble, and the sound of Will's intoxicating laughter, all of which sets Hannibal's blood to an ardent boil, heart simmering in gallons of desire.

Will pulls back, barely an inch, to look into Hannibal's eyes. Hannibal doesn't know what the omega sees, but whatever it is has Will caressing a prominent cheek and whispering, "This is a terrible fucking idea."

The corners of Hannibal's mouth jovially uptick, and he finds himself near giddy that he gets to speak his truth again, "I am exceptionally fond of..." His expression turns contemplative, a fine line between his brow, the lilt of his accented voice uncharacteristically playful as he says, "How did you put it?" He slips a steady hand around Will's waist, trapping him near, "Terrible fucking ideas."

Will bellows out a laugh, head tipping back and hands slipping to the collar of Hannibal's pea coat. Hannibal keenly watches the bob of a shadowed Adam's apple, wants to bite it, but finds his thoughts immediately stolen when Will tugs at his coat, their eyes meeting for a second time—Will's gaze a roiling and rumbling volcanic explosion of emotion, whereas Hannibal's is the deathly whispering chill of Arctic snow-capped mountains.

Will must like the cold, Hannibal surmises, for he lingers, under dressed in worn denim, in the shrouded confines of night, the darkness of which is no deterrent—nor is winter and its snowfall—when it comes to snuggling up with The Chesapeake Ripper and gazing heatedly into the monster's glacial eyes.

Granted, Will is unaware of the monster behind the person suit and its certain proclivities, but the good doctor also surmises that Will has proclivities of his own. Hannibal is beginning to

think Will is less of a peahen, and more of a praying mantis. Hannibal can't contain his smile—a mere quirking of his lips—or the electric shiver that tickles his spine at the wondrous notion of a predator becoming prey.

That particular thought cements itself in his mind as Will slides his hands up either side of Hannibal's neck, delicately curling his fingers around the back of it, pulling Hannibal near. Their lips meet, Hannibal entirely at Will's mercy, and far too content to envision the omega, with all his rapturous beauty, eating the alpha alive after the joining of flesh, after a successful mating.

Will would look positively and deliciously sinful drenched in the gore of another, raw organ meat between his teeth and the taste of copper on his tongue... Even if that taste is Hannibal. *Especially* if that taste is Hannibal. Will's sun-kissed skin would be splattered red, hair matted with sweat and blood, hands slippery with gleaming crimson as he buries them in the belly of his meal, into *Hannibal*.

If Will were so generous as to share his body with Hannibal, to let him explore the pleasures of it and fill it with child, it only seemed fair that Hannibal share his own. He'd be sorely tempted to set the dining room table for himself to lie upon. He'd be surrounded by blooming, vivacious toad lily's, bare limbs tangled in spiny yellow gorses as he used a scalpel of rose gold to slice himself from sternum to groin.

Hannibal should be reminding himself that there is no conceivable reason to play fair with Will, no reason to think of just and unjust, no reason not to only take and take and *take* with absolutely no give. Hannibal is *not* a generous man, nor is he a fair, is often cruelly otherwise, yet for Will...

For Will, if the blessed thing were truly famished, was wildly ravenous after a night of passion, Hannibal might be moved to spare a kidney—a worthy sacrifice if it meant having those perfect hands inside himself, to feel the caress of Will amongst his liver and lungs, to have Will pry open the warped steely gates of his ribs, cradling his charcoal heart as if it were precious treasure, setting it ablaze with fiery, emotional eyes. It's unfathomably intimate... as would be using his own body to nourish Will's that is to grow heavy with child.

There isn't much that Hannibal doesn't know or understand, but he is not familiar with intimacy, less so with fear, has never felt stunned by fright or struck by terror, not even as a prisoner of foreign armies during war and heavy winter storms, surrounded by guns and emaciated troops that did not speak his tongue. There was no water, save for snow melt over fire, no food save for his darling baby sister—healthily plump from a life of luxury and a brother that doted on her with treats.

Despite Mischa being only ten years of age, it took four grown men to quell her flailing limbs and smother the life from her small body. Hannibal could do little more than watch, chained as he was to the cabin floor. They used a blunt old felling axe to separate meat from bone which was made into a watery tasteless stew. Hannibal knows because they pulled his head back by his hair, pinched his nose closed until his body forced his mouth open for air, and shoved her down his throat.

He never felt fear, but he did feel rage and visceral hate so strong it became its own beast inside him. All that hate was too big for his adolescent skin, it shifted and shaped him until it became something other, what is now infamously known as The Chesapeake Ripper. Help arrived two days later. Mischa, his sweet angel of a sister, didn't need to die. Those men did, though. It would take years, decades for some, to hunt them all down and *eat* them.

Kissing Will Graham shouldn't spurn these kinds of memories, and it didn't, at least not directly. What it did do is churn up rare emotion, this wisp of feeling, acidic tendrils that whip at Hannibal's heart and his oil slickened soul, and it fills him not with fear, but with a sickly sort of dread.

Hannibal's hands would be trembling if he weren't a skilled and practiced surgeon, the limbs eternal in their steadiness. He lifts them with a hitch in his breath—Will's pretty lips, tender and soft, everything Hannibal isn't, as they kiss him. He touches Will's face, feels his coarse scruff and the silky skin beneath, grabs hold as gentle as the monster in him allows. Hannibal deepens the kiss knowing how well and truly damned he is because he thinks, deep down *he knows*, he's found his Achilles heel.

Doctor Hannibal Lecter is a self-serving, sadistic, cannibalistic, psychopathic, *murderer*, and yet, as he kisses Will Graham, he forgets himself. He's always been the center of his own universe, a god among *swine*, but Will with his sweet kisses and lovely laugh, that boyish grin, and the raging river, wet rock scent of fertility, is no pig.

He's no pig.

So, it's dread, and awe, and maybe even a little twinge of something resembling apprehension that Hannibal feels when he realizes he's found something worthy of his own worship, something equal, something potentially even better than himself. Will is the sort of something he'd tear worlds apart to have... is the kind of thing he'd sacrifice himself for if it kept the breath in Will's lungs and the beat of his heart drumming.

Decades ago, back in that rickety snowed-in cabin, so cold frost grew like mold on the walls while the chain around Hannibal's ankle felt more like ice than metal, yet burned like fire with frostbite—it wasn't fear of losing Mischa that had him begging, had him pleading with the men as she flailed and screamed helplessly in their boney hands.

Hannibal had beseeched they take him instead, *eat* him instead. He yanked so hard on the chain it felt like his leg might pull clean off, and he hollered so loud and so fierce he thought even God would have taken notice, but the men never even looked his way, never spared him a moments glance as they snuffed the life from his darling Mischa right before his very eyes.

It was like watching a piece of himself die, seeing half of his soul wither and turn to dust. She'd been the one good thing about him. His only saving grace. She was the angel perched on his shoulder, whispering mercy into his ear, "Please, Hanni, don't hurt that man. He has a family at home he needs to feed. They'll go hungry without him."

Hannibal could deny her nothing. He suspects the same of Will, and relinquishing that kind of power again... *Hell*, maybe he is afraid.

Hannibal pushes his hands into the sides of Will's hair, knocking the beanie from his head, it falling silently into the snow at their feet. Hannibal curls his fingers into the loose coils of Will's hair, gripping tightly, *painfully*, if Will's slight but tantalizing whimper is anything to go by. He could easily snap Will's neck right now... the boy would look so pretty dead in the snow, with glistening crystals of ice in his eyelashes and lips a hazy blue.

Will's flesh would quickly freeze, but like all others, would eventually turn to rot. Even if Hannibal managed to eat him despite the swine he is *not*, no bit left to spoil, it'd feel wasteful... just like the loss of Misha's life felt wasteful. She had so much more to offer, so much light she could've shed to fill the dark spaces where people like Hannibal lurk. Her innocence, her kindness, her *empathy*, made the world a better, brighter, more beautiful place.

She was holy where Hannibal was sin, a shooting star made of wishes to Hannibal's black hole. She was pure shining gold in a world where men sawed down magnificent forests, crumbled majestic mountains, polluted every waterway, and killed each other just to find a nugget of it. She never stood a chance.

But Will Graham... he turned his step father's torso into little more than mush, and yet smiles and speaks of death still. He teases of cannibalism and bludgeonings. He kisses mysterious alphas he'd just met in parking lots as snow dances all around him.

Will's no Mischa, but with the omega's lips on his, blunt nails digging into the back of Hannibal's neck as pearly teeth scrape against his lower lip, it sure feels like that missing piece of himself, that part of his soul that died when Mischa did, is rising from the dead.

It's Hannibal who breaks the kiss this time, still clinging to Will's hair, arms overlapping Will's own. Hannibal opens his eyes to find Will already watching, lively gaze *right there*, the sides of their noses touching as they share foggy breaths.

It's in this moment Hannibal lets go of all pretenses, peels back his layers and throws open the curtains. He so carefully keeps his monster tucked away, masks it with congeniality and hides it beneath expensive five-piece suits even though most people have their eyes wide shut, their sightless little peepers as good as plucked from their skulls.

People see what you tell them to see, the truth irrelevant in the court of public opinion. One false rumor can fell an innocent man, and then there's men like Hannibal who can get away with murder because no one bothers to open their eyes and *look*. The truth so brazenly stares them in the face, and yet, they can't *see* it. They don't even want to. They'd prefer to pretend monsters don't walk among them, and instead they clutch their purses close and avoid eye contact with the vagrant that panhandles on the corner of first and second, even though he's the type of person that frees butterflies from cobwebs.

Will's lips ghost over Hannibal's as a smile adorns them. Hannibal can't see it this close, but he likes the way Will's eyes smile at the same time, just a little crinkle in the far corners, heavenly blues swirling with an unnamed intensity as they flick between Hannibal's.

Will kisses him again, just a brief brushing of lips, eyes remaining open, gazes locked as he murmurs, "Are you in love with me yet, Doctor Lecter?"

Hannibal's fingers clench in Will's hair, tugging at the soft strands. "Do I seem rabid?"

Will's brow furrows, though his eyes keep their mirth. "It's hard to say. I'm a paranoid man, Doctor Lecter." His gaze turns rueful. "I attract all sorts of monsters."

Hannibal's heart bursts at the same time it implodes because that could mean everything or nothing at all. "Do you think me a monster, Will?"

Will huffs out a breathy laugh, a burst of air warm across Hannibal's mouth, chin, and cheeks. Will's hands prod, a playful drum of fingers, at the back of Hannibal's neck as he questions, "Why do you sound so hopeful?"

Hannibal doesn't have an answer that couldn't put him in prison, so he settles for pulling at Will's hair and guiding the omega's lips back to his. Will laughs this sweet, gentle sound into the kiss that has Hannibal smiling in return and wondering if maybe this is a bit what intimacy feels like... A pretty boy to hold onto, shared warmth and breath, along with the taste of Will's laughter in his mouth.

Hannibal's hands reluctantly fall to Will's middle as the omega slides his own over Hannibal's throat, coming upwards to tenderly cradle Hannibal's jaw, leaving goose pebbles in their wake. Will gently maneuvers Hannibal, turning his head slightly as he trails affection and kisses over Hannibal's cheek, hot breath caressing the alpha's ear as he whispers, "I think, *you*, Doctor Lecter, are an extraordinary, uniquely magnificent monster."

Hannibal's hands possessively clench the sides of Will's coat, bunching the denim in tightly curled fists. However, the rumble of an engine in the distance has Will parting from him, taking a few steps back, forcing Hannibal's hands to fall away, limp and empty.

Will turns to see the blur of headlights through the trees, a navy-blue Chevy Tahoe coming up the winding narrow drive, tires crunching over the packed snow. Will sighs, seeming inconvenienced, "That's Jack." He returns his attention to Hannibal while taking another few steps back, "My boss. I'm supposed to be working a case."

It's not like omegas to have a job, at least not ones born into money, but Will's unlike any other omega Hannibal has ever met, and presumably comes from simple means. So, it's with overwhelming curiosity that Hannibal inquires, "A case? Are you journalist?" Gossip would be right up an omega's alley, and what better gossip than a soiree for rich, single elites?

Will snorts in offense. "I'm profiler for the FBI. I help catch serial killers," Will says, blasé, matter-of-factly, like mentioning the sky is blue or water is wet. Will glances at the approaching Tahoe with a frown tugging at the corners of his mouth, "Strictly off the books because god forbid the public knew an omega worked for them." He slides his gaze Hannibal's way, clearly miffed. "Doesn't help that I don't have any credentials beyond personal experience and insight." A proud yet boyish smile dances over Will's lips as he adds, "I still manage to get the job done better than any of those corporate assholes, though."

If Doctor Hannibal Lecter were prone to squirming, now would certainly be the time. As it were, he just blinks and paints a friendly little quirk of a smile onto his mouth, and replies, "And who's the lucky serial killer that has you to hunt him?"

The Chevy Tahoe slows its approach, breaks squeaking as Will answers, “The Chesapeake Ripper.” Will, with snow dusting his wild curls and hands slipping into the pockets of his coat, grins the prettiest of things. “Have you heard of him?”

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

I'm so sorry, this chapter is long overdue! Unfortunately, I got covid shortly after posting the last chapter and I've been really struggling with overwhelming fatigue/exhaustion ever since. Most days I'm so tired I can hardly think, let alone write.

With that said, just know that while it may take me some time to post chapters, the story hasn't been abandoned.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Hannibal doesn't goggle at Will, but it's a damn near thing. It's not often he has to quell the urge to emote, truly almost never, yet here he is—heart skipping a beat before in ramps up a notch while his brow threatens to rise in surprise.

It isn't a difficult feat to keep himself composed and his expression neutral, but if he's honest with himself—which he almost always is—Will has blindsided him, and there's a chance that Hannibal enjoys the delightful little feeling of his stomach tangling up in knots.

Of all the people that might have caught Hannibal so gravely off guard, the good doctor would have never suspected an omega capable of such an exploit. Hannibal isn't typically in the habit of underestimating people, but in the alpha's defense and of his own personal and professional opinion, omegan wits have always been quantifiably lackluster.

Still, Hannibal only has himself to blame. Despite all the dog hair and denim, Hannibal knew Will was different just by looking at him, *and yet*, Hannibal willingly, no gladly, *giddily*, threw himself directly into whatever sort of trap—marvelous though it may be—Will is.

Hannibal is neither a pessimist nor an optimist, he's a realist and doesn't believe in coincidences. He's concocted and cultivated countless many himself and has literally gotten away with *murder* because of it. Hannibal is under no illusion that it was by some happy chance that unbeknownst to Will, he's obviously stumbled upon just the killer he's been looking for.

There surely has to be at least be some fragment of suspicion needling at Will's instincts. If not, Hannibal thinks he might actually find himself disappointed. Will simply wouldn't be the bright, sharp-eyed man Hannibal thought him to be. After all, what kind of FBI profiler can look the Chesapeake Ripper right in the eye and not even feel an itch or even the slightest tingle of suspicion?

Then again, if he does have suspicions, what kind of FBI profiler does it make Will for *kissing* his mark?

Was it passion or manipulation?

Hannibal supposes, at the end of the day, it doesn't really matter because he can work well with either. It's like Will said, he's an extraordinary, uniquely magnificent monster, and while Will might have only meant those words to bolster Hannibal's ego and soften his heart, which they most assuredly did, he also isn't wrong.

There is no situation Hannibal can't overcome. Nobody he can't charm. And besides, there's a lovely little darkness inside Will, and despite Hannibal being nothing of the nurturing sort, he will personally see to it that it not only grows, it *flourishes*. Hannibal wants little more than to see that darkness meet the light of day and the beautiful havoc it might render. Among that havoc would be infinite possibilities and delightfully macabre fairy tale endings.

It's that last line of thinking that as a 'realist' it probably should have given Hannibal some pause. If he was entirely in his right mind, he might consider the repercussions of romantically pursuing the man tasked to hunt the Chesapeake Ripper and there would perhaps be some hesitation, some careful forethought. If Hannibal Lecter's wits were completely intact and he wasn't strained by his midlife crisis, if loneliness and boredom didn't have the better of him, he'd abandon any foolish notion of finding a mate in Will Graham.

He'd certainly play with Will, having always liked a good game of cat and mouse, and content himself in winding Will up and watching him go. However, Hannibal isn't currently quite his meticulous self, and he finds his interest in the omega reaching an unprecedented crescendo.

The thing about Will Graham is he surprises Hannibal when *nobody* surprises Hannibal, and the good doctor likes the *feeling* of that. Most people, despite being alive, are dull, lifeless, and mind-numbingly predictable. Then in waltzes Will Graham with the pull of the tide before a tsunami—a smart boy with dark crevices that Hannibal wants to dive into head first just to find out what creepy, crawly, blood thirsty things might occupy his thoughts.

While Will likely isn't an inherent predator, not like Hannibal, there is *something* beneath his skin that lurks. Hannibal can sense it, one monster to another, and he intends to find out exactly what the something is.

The mystery of Will continues to build as much as it unfurls as the Chevrolet Tahoe comes to a slow stop. A face becomes visible through the windshield, and of all thousands of Jacks in the world Alana could have been speaking of when she earlier mentioned the name, Hannibal never would have predicted it belonging to Special Agent Jack Crawford, head of the FBI's Behavioral Science Unit.

Nevertheless, watching Jack slide his stocky build from the driver's side door with all the grace of an intact bull, Hannibal finds both familiarity and humor in the situation. Hannibal knows this man, has had both him and his wife, along with Alana, over for numerous dinner parties. Jack has eaten bits and pieces of no less than four of the Ripper's victims, has even spoken of them and their murderer as he gobbled them all up, later complimenting the chef.

Jack is the all-American stereotype of an alpha. A big, burly, *bully*. His stern face is always a mask of severity and displeasure, which makes sense since he spends his days surrounded by corpses, haunted and tormented by their killers.

Jack naïvely believes in justice and the law, but not necessarily doing the right thing when push comes to shove, especially when, in his mind, the end justifies the means. He's not above bending or breaking the rules he so thoroughly defends and represents if it gets him the killer he wants. As of late, he's been swirling down the Chesapeake Ripper rabbit hole—so close, yet so far.

He chases all the wrong phantoms, hasn't a modicum of evidence, and yet is so righteously deluded that he believes he has the capability to put the Ripper behind bars. Jack swore an oath to bring murderers to justice, but he won't catch the Ripper, for Jack is one of those people with plucked eyes because Hannibal can offer up all the evidence he needs on a silver platter and Jack just blindly *eats* it.

It's no wonder Jack has come into the possession of Will Graham, for every blind man needs a seeing eye dog, and what better puppy for a man like Jack Crawford than a pretty little blood hound?

Jack rounds the SUV, leaving the engine running, door open, and headlights beaming against the falling snow. He's in his usual boring wear, a charcoal grey suit and a pressed maroon dress shirt, while a silver tie hangs lifelessly from around his thick neck.

Jack's hostile expression doesn't soften, but it does waver and then ultimately falter when his dissatisfied brown-eyed gaze meets Hannibal's. Jack may be blind, but he isn't completely stupid, he knows when he's in the company of a superior alpha and behaves accordingly.

Jack politely nods in greeting, ignoring the omega in favor of Hannibal, and while it is the polite and proper thing to do, it clearly makes Will bristle. Will shuffles his feet in the snow, shoulders rolling along with his eyes as he turns his petulant face away from the two of them.

Jack gives Hannibal's hand a quick courteous shake, clearly for proprieties sake. Nevertheless, Hannibal warmly accepts it, saying, "Special Agent Crawford, what a nice surprise."

The greeting has Will jerking his head back their way, eyes widening, eyebrows lifting before he quickly schools his expression into a look of indifference, clearly caught unaware that Hannibal and Jack are familiar with each other.

As Hannibal's hand gingerly falls back to his side, Jack inquires about Will, briefly glancing the omega's way, "Has he been pestering you?"

Will's unruly gaze catches Hannibal's and he raises his chin defiantly, a show of confidence in himself and a lack of it in Hannibal, as if he's silently saying 'do your worst,' like he actually expects Hannibal to speak rudely of him. The poor boy truly doesn't have a clue just how bad the good doctor can be and how little a fuck he truly gives about *everything*, especially about impressing men like Jack Crawford.

Some alphas might feel shame in enjoying the company of an omega, but Will will come to find that Hannibal is utterly shameless. Hannibal doesn't feel embarrassment like others do. He doesn't know the anxiety that judgement can cause. In fact, he doesn't know anxiety at all.

Hannibal proudly is what he is, and has no qualms that he likes what he likes. While many of his passions are not lawful, he still finds his own way of sharing them, and despite the general public's distraught uproar, he doesn't find himself in any way dissuaded. So, even if enjoying Will's company brought men with pitchforks to Hannibal's door, the doctor isn't intimidated by *pigs*, nor does he care what they think.

Jack is little more than swine, albeit of the more tolerable and comedic variety, which makes it all too easy for Hannibal to throw on that mask of congeniality he wears so well and pleasantly say, "On the contrary, Will has been wonderful company this evening."

While that earns Hannibal a side-eyed glance with a hint of an approving, bashful smile from Will, it interestingly enough, has Jack looking skeptical, like he can't truly believe someone might enjoy the boy's company. Will spots Jack's incredulousness almost immediately which has the adverse effect of twisting that lovely smile into a truculent glower.

Jack is a man who demands respect and unwavering obedience, and struggles to find patience with polite folk on a good day. Therefore, it's not surprising to watch him make his best attempt at wrangling his temper and all the unsavory words he undoubtedly wants to hurtle at Will for his attitude.

Jack settles for gruffly barking, "You're on the clock, Will."

Will's molars grind together as he sucks in a deep steadying breath, nostrils flaring. The look of indignation is incomprehensibly beautiful on Will's handsome face paired with the snow in his curls, shining like priceless jewels from the glow of the Chevy's headlights.

Any omega would cower under the weight of Jack's disapproval, but not his precious Will, "And I told you that if you wanted me to gather evidence, it would require me to be *sociable*."

"Come on, *Will*," Jack frustratedly growls. "You don't really think the Ripper was at Alana's party."

Hannibal looks to Will at the same time Will looks to Hannibal, they share a quiet moment in which Hannibal decides there's no amount of gold he wouldn't give to know what's going on behind those pretty blue eyes. Normally they shine with unrepentant emotion, but right now they give away *nothing*.

Will's attention momentarily drops away as he wets his lips in that darling, subconscious way of his. A hand also escapes his pocket and he aimlessly combs his fingers through his hair, sweeping away most of the snow. His eyes swing upwards, back to Hannibal, gaze considering.

Will takes a subtle step closer to Hannibal, erasing some of the distance he'd created seconds before Jack arrived. "You're the psychiatrist, Doctor Lecter. What do you think?" Will questions, stormy eyes calculatingly calm as they bore into Hannibal's. "Would it be crazy of me to think the Ripper could have been here tonight?"

Crazy isn't the word Hannibal would use. Impressive, phenomenal, *mine*, are all better suited for describing this perfect omega.

With that said, Hannibal can't be certain how deeply Will's suspicions lie. He can hazard a guess, and with Will's attention so pointedly on him, it's likely safe to assume. It would be in Hannibal's best interest to err on the side of caution and pander to Jack's point of view and ultimately his good will, but Hannibal isn't the pandering sort and he thoroughly despises the thought of giving Jack anything he wants or desires.

It's with a straight back, hands clasped at his front, and with the calmest of demeanors, Hannibal tells Will, "They'd have been a fool not to attend." He glances back to Jack, crookedly smirking, hoping he looks as enamored with Will as he truly is. "As I mentioned, the company was wonderful."

Something about coy, tittering, omegas rankle Hannibal's nerves and fills him with murderous intent, but watching Will's delectable mouth smile as he ducks his head and turns it out of sight makes the monster inside Hannibal surge. Unlike other times, it's not with his usual urge to maim and kill, or even feast. Instead, it's a desperate yearning to hold, to hug, to squeeze Will so tightly to himself that they become one in the same.

Special Agent Crawford appears decidedly less pleased as he grouches, "I'd prefer if you didn't encourage him, Doctor."

Hannibal cocks his head. It's an infinitesimal bit of movement, practically imperceptible, like the shift of snake's eye when its forked tongue catches the scent of a big juicy mouse. It's all hungry predator, same with the narrowing of Hannibal's eyes and the tightening of his shoulders, as if getting ready to strike.

Hannibal doesn't openly glare, but he does ponder all the vicious torments he could rain upon the agent should the opportunity arise. How Jack, a man that's as insignificant as a speck of sand in the desert, stumbled upon a treasure like Will Graham is a mystery. How he doesn't see the omega's genius, is an even bigger one.

It's a tragedy that Will isn't being honored for the incredibly rare gem that he is. Jack must get glimpses of Will's brilliant shine every now and then considering he keeps the boy around, but for Jack to be so idiotically and blindly bold to reject Will's opinion with no consideration of his aptitude for seeing, *is*... come to think of it, rather fortuitous for Hannibal.

It's the subtle rustle of Will's denim jacket and the quiet crunch of snow under one of his boots as he shifts his weight that gathers Hannibal's attention. What keeps it in absolute focus and in startling clarity is when Will proceeds to grumble, "The Ripper's lonely."

Jack scoffs while Hannibal feels a searing fire scorch his heart.

“The party was by invite only,” Jack reminds Will. “Are you trying to insinuate that Alana might unknowingly be friendly with the Ripper?”

Will turns his eyes away from the intensity of Jack’s harsh, unwaveringly judgmental, and scornful gaze as he derisively mutters, “It wouldn’t surprise me.”

Jack is not a twitchy man, but something or perchance *everything* about Will Graham irritates him, because his jaw tenses and his brow creases, mouth curling into a frustrated scowl. “Alana thinks you’ve been throwing yourself at Doctor Lecter because...” Jack briefly acknowledges Hannibal’s presence and wisely considers his words before returning his attention to Will, saying, “They have a shared history.” Will blinks and when his eyes open a half second later, they have swiveled the agent’s way. “I don’t have time for your petty omega—”

Like a dam, Will loudly bursts, “I said he’s fucking lonely, Jack!”

A switch flips in Jack Crawford, a tether snares, a cord snaps, Hannibal isn’t the only alpha here tonight at wits end, granted Jack is unimpressively obvious about it. His hooded eyes are comically wide with undignified anger as he takes three long strides to aggressively loom over Will.

“And you think, *what*, exactly?” Jack snarls, intimidatingly alpha. Although, Hannibal sees his ruffled feathers for what they are. Special Agent Crawford and all his imperiousness is just an aggressively noisy *rooster* that thinks himself an eagle. “That the Chesapeake Ripper came here looking for a date? A *mate*?”

Will doesn’t cower, he’s better than that, but his eyes do shy away from Jack’s, head lowered, not quite submissively, but more for the sake of self-preservation. “No,” he replies, Hannibal unable to appreciate how meek he sounds. The doctor doesn’t like the look of it on Will. Jack does, of course. It seems to assuage the spurring, pecking little rooster inside himself and he takes a step back.

“Then what? What was the Ripper doing here?”

Will gives his shoulders, dusted with snow, a slight, insouciant shrug. “I don’t think he had anything better to do.”

Jack is remarkably unimpressed by Will’s comment. He returns to looming, raising a beefy hand to grip at Will’s jaw, forcing his head up, angled towards Jack’s face. “Look at me,” Jack sternly demands, and Will reluctantly does. “You need to get your head back in the game here, Will. We stand a better chance at catching this guy with you in the saddle.”

Hannibal figures this is the moment where any white knight would step in, assert his authority, and rescue Will from Special Agent Crawford’s strong-arming clutches. However, Hannibal is no white knight and the last thing he wants or needs is a princess that requires rescuing from an exasperated *chicken*. Plus, now he gets to witness Will’s eyes come alive and brighten with a turbulent ferocity.

“Well, you know what they say, Jack,” Will hisses, all snark and bravado, “You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink.”

The thin lines of Agent Crawford’s eyebrows angrily raise while his hand squeezes, the tips of his fingers digging into the scruffy flesh of Will’s jaw. “Are you calling me a horse?”

If there’s pain, Will doesn’t flinch. “I’m calling you a *stubborn* horse.”

There’s a tense moment where both men—alpha and omega—silently stare at each. Hannibal almost expects Jack to strike the younger man, is unexpectedly hopeful if only to see how Will might react.

“He was at that party,” Will insists through gritted teeth.

Jack’s widened eyes narrow as he seemingly considers what Will is saying. “Fine,” he relents, removing his hand from Will and trudging a short distance away.

As Will massages the ache from his jaw, Crawford glances around them, vision quickly slipping past Hannibal as he lifts his arms, motioning outward and at toward nothing in particular as he turns, eyeing the rest of parking lot and the old grandiose building standing eerie amongst the night and snow, cathedral windows warmly alight.

“Where’s the Ripper then?” Jack demands, eyes shifting here, there, and everywhere before stepping back around, attention returning to Will. “Because I don’t see him.”

Will blinks, not quite startled, almost flabbergasted, but there’s judgement there too, or perhaps it’s just acknowledgement of how laughably incompetent Special Agent Crawford is.

In the next moment, Will’s gaze darts Hannibal’s way, locking his piercing eyes onto the alpha’s. Something about the poke and prod of them has Hannibal’s monster restless, a thing normally content to dwell in wait, but now its peeking out their shared windows and curiously observing the boy.

When Will ambles forward, he bites his bottom lip as his brow furrows with concentration. His focus is determinedly hooked on Hannibal’s eyes, like he saw the flutter of curtains and he’s trying to get a better look. Hannibal’s monster doesn’t slink back or away, nor does it step out into clear view. It simply watches Will with a serene and eager intensity.

Will is close enough that he barely has to reach when he gently brushes his fingers along the inside of Hannibal’s wrist. It’s the barest hint of a touch, yet it has the monster in Hannibal practically throwing itself against the windows into plain sight for anyone with the eyes to see. It’s chasing after that cherished touch, like a slobbery overgrown mutt with a hambone, and Hannibal can’t even blame himself—the ravenous, touch-starved *monster* that he is.

“Oh, no. No, no, no,” Jack snaps, and for a brief moment in time Hannibal thinks the special agent understood what Will might’ve been trying to see and the accusation that lies there, but then Hannibal is promptly reminded how blind a sighted man can be, “Doctor Lecter is *not* your backup. He is *not* your alpha.” *Yet*. He is not Will’s alpha... *yet*.

Jack swiftly turns his disapproval onto Hannibal, jabbing a pointed finger at him, and like the senseless little rooster that Jack is, crows, “Don’t you *dare* encourage him.”

Tempers are rising and while the good doctor doesn’t appreciate Jack shouting at him, nor telling him what to do—it’s rather *rude* after all—he sure does admire Will, the flippant beauty that he is, getting all worked up, “You know, *Jack*, I’m a little confused about what you expect me to do. Walk into a room of over a hundred fucking people and know *exactly* who the Chesapeake *goddamn* Ripper is?”

Worry isn’t an emotion Hannibal has been acquainted with, but there’s this niggling at the back of his brain, a termite of thought chewing its way into consideration that makes Hannibal wonder if that isn’t precisely what Will had done.

Despite Jack’s blood pressure undoubtedly rising, Jack is notably composed as he retorts, “You are to gather evidence and bring me a *suspect*.” Will’s eyes find Hannibal’s again, but they’re soft and by no means accusatory. They simply stare, regardful, ponderous. “Instead, you let yourself get distracted by an *alpha*.”

Oh, and there’s that gorgeous indignation again and Will is just *wrought* with it. If only Hannibal could eternally bathe in the fire and fury of Will’s deific gaze, to always feel the harsh bite of it eat at his flesh, dig through fat and muscle, and carve through bone.

“My apologies, Will,” Hannibal says, unflappable in his affability as he graciously nods his head, more of a courteous bow because an omega as other as Will deserves all of Hannibal’s respect and the entirety of his devotion. “I should not have monopolized your time.”

Hannibal turns his sights on Jack and while Will is no need of rescue, Hannibal is eager to get the agent to *shut up*—not for the omega’s sake, but because the good doctor, in his current state of mind, can only stretch his patience so thin, and he can’t stand much more of Jack’s obnoxious cockadoodle-dooing.

There’s a scalpel hidden inside the breast pocket of Hannibal’s suit jacket, neatly tucked behind his pocket square, and he has the savage compulsion to stab it into Crawford’s jugular, slicing it neatly across his throat.

Jack’s a sturdy man, he wouldn’t initially crumble to the snow. He’s a *stubborn horse* after all. He’d end up frantically grabbing at his wound, hands clumsy with the slip and slide of blood, trying desperately to stop the pulsing flow of it through his fingers. He’d hardly last half a minute before he lost control of his body—mind dizzy, and vision blotchy, his knees buckling, legs jellylike. He’d fall unceremoniously into the snow, rolling to his back as he gurgled and choked on his own blood, wound wetly wheezing as he gasped for breath, air being sucked in and out through the gash in his neck.

Jack’s hands would eventually relax, his limbs limp, and as a look of hysterical horror overcame him, he’d die staring up into the cruel, ruthless gaze of The Chesapeake Ripper.

That thought soothes the monster inside Hannibal as he explains to Jack, “Admittedly, it was I who was distracted. Imagine being in a room full of vultures when in walks a swan.”

Jack scowls in distaste, but Will's lips curve up into this small yet magnetic smile that makes Hannibal think of spring and wildflowers. Hannibal desperately wants to kiss the boy again, if only to get a taste of sunshine and growing things. Warmth doesn't come naturally to Hannibal, nor does it follow him. It's the chill of death that cocoons him, artificially warmed by kitchen appliances, and like a cold-blooded reptile sun bathing on a rock, Hannibal wants to soak in all that warmth and all that life Will exudes.

For the first time in a long time, Hannibal looks at someone and doesn't see a bag of meat, he sees a priceless wonder. The fact that Jack doesn't see Will in the same way, it disturbs Hannibal. It grates on the monster's nerves. It riles something misshapen, something ugly, and it feels a lot like *rage*.

It's for that reason, Hannibal suddenly abandons his attempt at placating Jack, and turns his gaze back to his darling omega, "I have the utmost faith in your capabilities, Will. If you say the Ripper was here tonight, then I shall take your word for it."

Shock isn't what colors Will's face—a cousin perhaps, seeing as it's a mix of mild confusion and terribly subdued elation. The grin that morphs Will's face doesn't remind Hannibal of wildflowers this time, but of wild *things*.

"You don't strike me as a flatterer, Doctor Lecter," Will muses.

Smiles aren't technically contagious, not even the wildest of ones, yet Hannibal can't seem to quell the slight quirk of his own that Will's has so pleasantly inspired. "I assuredly am not."

Will's eyebrows rise in delight. "You believe me?"

"I believe *in* you," Hannibal corrects. "After all, where there's a Will, there's a way."

Though Will's heart may be that of a lion, dauntless and full of boyish impudent courage, he is still an omega and he blushes furiously, cheeks redder than the chill in the air could ever make them. Of all the pretty sights Hannibal has seen, of all the wonders of the world he's set his gaze upon, nothing even compares to the wonder that is Will Graham.

With his flushed cheeks and shining eyes, Will asks, "Do you want to know why I think the Ripper is lonely?"

Hannibal wants to know every thought that has ever crossed Will's brilliant mind, so he nods, just single, slow dip of his chin. "I do."

There's movement in Will's pockets where he's hidden his hands again, they're flexing, his arms shifting, along with his knees and feet making stilted movements. Hannibal can tell Will wants to pace or move, yet he's holding himself back for one reason or another. That reason, of course, most likely being *Jack*, whom Hannibal had very nearly forgotten was here at all, lost in the moment as he was.

The good doctor glances Jack's way, and while the agent's face is pinched in it's normal look of severity and superiority, Hannibal is consoled by the fact that he doesn't find any traces of anger toward Will. There is still that overabundance of irritation... *however*, Jack thankfully

doesn't speak on it. Pleasantly enough, he doesn't say anything at all, not even as Will unexpectedly—at least for Hannibal—drops down to one knee into the snow, head bowed, right in front of the smitten alpha.

Will holds his arms out in front of himself, toward Hannibal, hands cupped together as if cradling something precious. Hannibal loses his breath, along with his thoughts, utterly stupefied as he recognizes Will for what he is—the Chesapeake Ripper's latest display.

Will lifts his chin, but his eyes remain closed, for the Ripper had torn them out and placed them gently, *reverently*, on a bed of fresh petunia and dried white rose petals in the palms of masculine outstretched hands.

Will's expression is twisted into that of agony, both physical and emotional, as he so boldly declares, "The gouges on my back are where the world has clipped my wings, for it would not have me fly freely. And though I am on bended knee, beseeching, smell my crown of angrec—I am. *better* than you."

Hannibal can see it—the flowers he'd woven together and the stark contrast of their vibrant milky white against Will's dark curls, light powdery snow making them glisten. It causes Hannibal's skin to pebble as a shiver of emotion rolls over him. When your medium is death, it's surreal watching it come to life.

Although Will's eyes remain closed, he lowers his head as if looking to his bare torso, gaunt and grey with death. Hannibal carved a gaping hole right through the middle, a waterfall of purple hydrangea blooms and viscera cascading from it.

Will's arms move downward, hands reaching to touch the silky, bloodstained petals that aren't actually there, and yet he so carefully brushes the tips of his fingers over the delicate flowers that one might even call it affectionate.

Will murmurs, "I have made myself hollow. I feel empty taking refuge inside myself, but look, *look*, I have opened myself up for you. Now you can see me inside and out."

Will's hardened expression comes into view. He gazes at Hannibal with empty sockets for eyes, and beneath those grisly holes lay a trickle of pretty, wet tears. Hannibal imagines them the way he had made them, gold tipped thorns piercing outward through flesh.

"I may not weep the way average men do, but I feel the sharp pang of isolation. I am *not* a solitary creature by nature, but by need. Where I see beauty and art, when I express myself, the world cries out in horror."

Will lifts his hands again, arms taught and outstretched, tips of his fingers slightly curled as if to protect precious cargo. "I am gifting you my own eyes so that you might use them to observe existence through my lens, and I ask..." Will's eyebrows dip, pained, as he whispers, "I am begging you," he steadies his voice, loud and clear this time as he demands, "*Look at me.*"

Hannibal moves without thinking, a startling and concerning lack of impulse control. It's like his hands move on their own accord, jerking forward as if starved of oxygen and the only

thing that will allow them to breath is the feel of Will's skin on his own.

Hannibal clasps his hands around Will's, the omega's eyes flicking open in an instant—Will's bruising, penetrating gaze staring upwards and wholly on Hannibal. Even though Will's pretty blues aren't at all reminiscent of Hannibal's own whiskey amber eyes, there's something about the murky depths of them that has the good doctor asking, "Are you wearing the Ripper's eyes, Will?"

Hannibal gently pulls Will to his feet as Will responds, "I wear everybody's from time to time." Will keeps hold of Hannibal's hands as he nonchalantly shrugs. "Walk a mile in their shoes, so to speak."

Oh, you darling, marvelous, empathetic boy.

"So, the Ripper wants someone to 'get him.' He wants to be *understood*?" Jack says with a disparaging scoff. He's less than a foot away and just behind one of Hannibal's shoulders, and at the sound of his voice, Will immediately let's go of Hannibal's hands, his touch lost.

There are no two ways about it, Hannibal wants to bash the agent's skull in. He wants to whirl around and grab Crawford by the back of his neck and repeatedly slam his pockmarked face into the side of the rumbling Chevy Tahoe, right above the front wheel well.

He doesn't, of course, instead Hannibal finds refuge in watching Will brush the snow from his knees, denim stained darker with moisture, aggravatedly sighing as his lovely lips dip into a frown. "The Ripper would never be so prosaic. If there's one thing he is, it's consistently theatrical. Any two-bit killer could understand the Ripper's base instincts. He's wants more."

Jack steps forward, nearly shoulder to shoulder with Hannibal. "More? And what exactly does that entail?"

Will doesn't hesitate to tell Jack, "Something *immersive*."

Hannibal wouldn't go as far as to say Jack looks baffled since he does a fine job of appearing deceptively knowledgeable, but his brow is scrunched and his lips are halfway to pursed in a vaguely contemplative way.

Will takes notice and chooses to simplify what is already—in Hannibal's opinion—quite simple. "He's a psychopathic hedonist," Will supplies. "It takes a *lot* to make him feel. He craves intimacy. If I had to hazard a guess, I'd say he wants to smother and be smothered by it."

Jack nods like he understands. "In other words, he *does* want a mate."

Will frustratedly groans, closing his eyes and tilting his face heavenward, as if praying for patience. His chest rises as he inhales a deep breath, eyes opening and returning to Jack. "Yes and no."

Surprised, Jack says, "No? What's more intimate than sex?"

"*Murder*," Hannibal and Will reply in unison.

Entirely dismayed, and as his gaze shifts back and forth between Hannibal and Will, Jack comes to the conclusion, “He wants a partner to kill with.”

Will nods. “He’s an artist—” Jack finds that last word particularly triggering, if his bugged eyes and scorned expression are anything to go by, “—with a particularly brutal and gruesome vision.” Will’s gaze flits to Hannibal’s, speaking directly to him, “It’ll be damn near impossible finding someone to paint with that isn’t an imminent threat.” He looks back to the Agent, “The Ripper wants someone who’d be unimaginably loyal to him. Someone devoted and trustworthy. For lack of better words: a *soulmate*.”

Hannibal has never been one to be spoiled by pessimism, he likes to think his mind is firmly grounded in reality—he’s a realist, remember? However, he’d gone into this evening moodier than he’d ever admit and with a zesty sprig of hopelessness looming over him, like Thor himself had just begun to conjure a storm.

Bumping into Will has reminded Hannibal that fate favors those that make their own. Hannibal isn’t afraid of a little hard work, and besides, the good doctor is confident there is an auspicious fellow artist knocking somewhere around the omega’s brain. It’s only a matter of discovering his preferred medium.

Jack, with all the instinct of a kakapo, queries, “You’re certain about this?”

Will makes a noise of consideration, “I mean, it’s all speculation...” Is he planting seeds of doubt or is he doubting himself?

Agent Crawford shoots Will a disgruntled little glower, “*Will*.”

The omega bites back an aggrieved huff, shoulders rolling as tension ripples through them. “I’m not a fucking psychic, *Jack*. I’m just telling you how I see it.”

It pains Hannibal to admit it, but there’s something unconventionally charming about how uncouth Will can be, especially when those uncouth words are directed at Jack. Jack, however, is of opposite mind, and has evidently had enough of Will for the evening.

Jack’s heated vision wanders the parking lot, “Where’s your car, Will?”

“I ubered here,” Will states, shoving his hands back into his pockets. “I haven’t been home since you picked me up at the ass crack of dawn.”

Jack Crawford for all his severity, seems as if partially chastised. “If you’d answered your—”

“—I told you,” Will butts in, “I was *sleeping*. That’s what normal people do at four in the morning.”

Agent’s Crawford’s expression exceeds dubiousness and falls entirely into disagreeable. “There is absolutely *nothing* normal about you, Will Graham.”

Will snorts out a disdainful little laugh. “Well, forgive me for the attempt.” He steps closer to Hannibal. “Are we done here?” he asks Jack, and nudges his arm against Hannibal’s. “Doctor Lecter said he’d give me a ride.”

“Not a chance in hell,” Jack readily retorts, quickly averting his attention from Will and placing it on Hannibal. “No offence intended, Doctor. I trust you.” His gaze shifts back to Will, “It’s *you*,” he says with a pointed finger, “I don’t.”

Will stiffens beside Hannibal, his eyes and all the blue stormy seas of them, dig their sharp trident prongs into Jack, “*Right*... because omegas such as myself turn into big dumb sluts when alone in the company of a high value alpha.”

Now isn’t the moment to preen, but Hannibal’s monster does inwardly purr at the knowledge that Will recognizes their worth.

Jack holds his hands up in mock surrender. “You said it, not me.” He motions toward the Chevy Tahoe, “Now *get in* the vehicle.”

Will heavily sighs, but he doesn’t protest. Hannibal moves with him, their shoes crunching through the snow, and he opens the passenger side door of the SUV for the omega.

Just inside the door and before climbing in, Will pauses. He looks at Hannibal, pleasantly thoughtful with an equally pleasant little smile playing on his lips, and remarks, “And they say chivalry is dead.”

Warmth blooms in Hannibal’s chest and while he could swallow down his besotted smile if he wanted to, he lets it take shape, saying, “It is, admittedly, a lost artform.”

As Will slides onto his seat, he jovially remarks, “I’m sure you know all about art, Doctor Lecter.”

Hannibal nods his head in assent while there’s a little ditty in the back of his mind repeating itself that he ought to be a lot more careful than he’s being. “A thing or two.”

Will grins, and it reminds Hannibal of feral wolves and wily coyotes. “No need to be modest, Doctor Lecter.” Will leans closer, foggy breath creating a nice hazy mist as he whispers, “I know you’re not.”

Will reaches out and tugs Hannibal in by the lapels of his coat and for one quick moment when Will’s chilly hands reach for his face, he thinks Will is going to kiss him. Instead, Will’s fingers confidently and erratically comb their way through Hannibal’s impeccably placed hair, completely mussing it—the ashy brown strands sticking up in some places, whereas the front falls voluminously over his forehead.

Will leans back, admiring his handiwork, and without a word spoken he shoves Hannibal away, grabbing the door and closing it in the good doctor’s face. *Dismissed*.

Stunned doesn’t quite express how disjointed, unbalanced, and frankly, discombobulated the good doctor feels. He slowly turns around, making his best attempt at righting his hair without a mirror.

“A swan, huh?” Jack humorously muses from a few feet away, yet as he approaches, he levels Hannibal with a sincere, but serious stare. “He’s a trainwreck, Doctor Lecter, and as

your friend, I'd advise you not to get caught up in it."

Hannibal tilts his head in acknowledgement, appearing appreciative. "Duly noted."

Jack's eyebrows rise, questioning. "You'll stay away from him?"

Standing tall and strong, back ramrod straight, Hannibal neatly clasps his hands behind his back. "I'm a psychiatrist, Special Agent Crawford. Trainwrecks fascinate me."

Jack's brow furrows just a smidgen. "You think you can fix him?"

"I'm not of the mind that he needs fixing."

Jack counters, "You don't even know him."

"I want to," Hannibal earnestly replies, nothing but honesty.

"He's troubled."

Hannibal gives Jack a sharp, pointed look. "Not too troubled he can't moonlight for the FBI."

Agent Crawford's hands briefly clench at his sides, just a momentary squeeze before he lets them fall loose. Since he's just about out of excuses, his next one flounders like a hapless fish washed ashore. "He's a bit young for you, no?"

Hannibal doesn't blink, nor does he stutter, "Will is a young adult. I trust his judgement, and to at least some degree, considering the circumstances, so do you."

Jack makes a sound awfully akin to a growl as he turns on his heel and heavily clomps his way through the snow, rounding the SUV. Over the hood of the vehicle, he throws, "Will has a job to do. I can't have him getting distracted, Doctor..." The Agent scowls in disgust with the following words spoken, "Or *pregnant*."

Hannibal simply nods, words heard, undoubtedly by Will, too, and as Jack clambers into the SUV, slamming the door, Hannibal finds his eyes catching with Will's through the glass of the window. When the Chevy Tahoe starts to roll, Will doesn't lift a hand and give a slight and courteous wave like Hannibal does, *no*, he *winks*.

Jack makes a U-turn, crossing over empty parking stalls, and then they're gone, making their way through the winding drive, lights fading. Hannibal watches until they're out of sight. It's then he prowls to his own car, buried in snow. At the passenger side, where he'd kissed Will, he toes through the snow, bending when he finds what he's looking for: Will's beanie.

Hannibal shakes what snow he can from it, then pats away the rest. He picks off a few errant dog hairs and proceeds to turn the soft, albeit hideously cheap fabric, inside out. He doesn't hesitate to press it to his nose, deeply inhaling, happily *drowning* in the condensed scent of his lovely, darling Will Graham.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading! I hope you enjoyed the chapter!

Chapter 7

The only favorable opinion Hannibal has in regards to Franklyn Froideveaux is that he's punctual. He's never been late, is often early, and has always adhered to Hannibal's strict 24-hour cancellation policy. In fact, he's never cancelled at all.

Today is one of those rare days where Doctor Lecter is in an especially magnanimous mood if only for the fact that he would have preferred to not see Franklyn at all. If Franklyn had cancelled last minute, rude though it may be, Hannibal would have welcomed the reprieve.

Hannibal isn't one to wallow in self-pity, but the last few weeks have trickled by with all the fervor of a river made of molasses. Hannibal had expected to hear from Will, yet the omega has been notably absent. He doesn't call, he doesn't text, there hasn't even been an *email*. Hannibal has checked and double checked his spam folder morning, noon, and night, and frequently in between—*just in case*.

Hannibal realizes this overtly pathetic, obsessive, repetitive behavior is abnormal for himself. However, he reconciles with this fact by acknowledging that while he shouldn't allow himself to hyper focus like this on an omega, it isn't entirely irrational given how fascinatingly exceptional Will Graham is.

Nevertheless, the good doctor blames the monster inside himself. For all of Hannibal's patience, the monster hasn't any. There's a fine dance between them. Give and take. And although they are technically one in the same, sometimes it's best to give his base instincts some space. Yet, lately, the monster—a figment of his cruelest desires—has been crowding him. Hannibal isn't easily overwhelmed, but his desire for Will is distinctly smothering.

It's also distracting, Hannibal's mind wandering to thoughts of the omega when he ought to be focused on patients. Speaking of which, Franklyn, in his honey yellow blazer, sits on the edge of a charcoal grey lounge seat, leaning forward, clasping his round, sausage like fingers as he stares at Hannibal with considerable fervency.

In contrast, Hannibal's posture is relaxed, one pinstriped leg crossed over the other, expression warm but not particularly welcoming.

Franklyn sees whatever he wants to and it causes the pudgy, unsightly omega to smile a minute ugly thing that would appear smitten, perhaps even coy, on someone that doesn't descend to disgustingly unfathomable depths below average in both appearance and personality.

Hannibal is the one to break the silence, "Would you like to discuss our chance encounter?"

Franklyn awkwardly chuckles, twisting his stubby fingers and ducking his head. "It wasn't altogether by chance. I kind of thought you'd be there," he says, stating the obvious. "Which isn't why I was there," he lies and not well. "I was there because I'm single, and you know, ready to mingle." Franklyn waggles his eyebrows. It's meant to seem playful, and disturbingly enough, likely even flirtatious. "It just occurred to me that you might be too."

Hannibal exhales a pained breath, utterly revolted, and doesn't dignify any of that with a response. Instead, he folds his hands on his lap, holding them firmly together, thoughts flitting toward Will and how he'd charmingly mentioned bludgeoning Franklyn with a paperweight.

Hannibal's eyes stray to his desk, an original Leif Jacobsen design, and to the paperweight atop it—a recent purchase. A striking glass orb with a fanciful peacock—feathers of gold and molten sapphire—held inside of it.

“I wanted to get your attention,” Franklyn continues, “to keep your attention.”

Hannibal's vision shifts back to Franklyn. “I was aware of that.”

Franklyn nods. “I knew that you were aware,” he says, sighing, briefly glancing away before turning his dimwitted, infatuated gaze back on Hannibal. “I wish I knew who you are outside this room.”

“I am your psychiatrist,” Hannibal bluntly states.

“I want you to be my alpha.”

Franklyn isn't the first person, or even patient, to say precisely that. However, Doctor Lecter is distinctly offended by Franklyn's audacity and his repulsive, outlandish presumption that Hannibal could in any capacity reciprocate his feelings.

Franklyn adds, “It makes me sad that I have to pay to see you.”

Hannibal can't help himself, his eyes stray back to his desk, to the sparkle of the paperweight, and he imagines how unfathomably gorgeous Will would look bashing Franklyn over the back of the head with it.

Will did say Hannibal isn't a damsel, plus the alpha doesn't relish the thought of needing rescue, but there's just something special, something wonderful about that particularly brutal thought, about Will saving Hannibal from Franklyn's unhinged drivel.

Hannibal wants to see his pretty, wicked boy dotted in blood splatter—to see the torn meat of another between his perfect, pearly teeth. He wants to kiss Will when the omega's mouth tastes of copper and victory.

“I'm a great omega,” Franklyn ridiculously insists. He lifts his right hand, sleeve slipping down, a clunky Rolex coming into view as he points a pudgy finger at Hannibal. “*You* taught me that.”

Hannibal blinks away an impending sneer as he tightens his hands together—pictures them around Franklyn's neck along with all the shades of purple his face would turn as he strangled the wretched life from him.

“I am source of stability and clarity, Franklyn,” Hannibal patiently explains. “I am *not* and will *never* be your alpha.”

Franklyn inhales a sharp breath, dark eyes widening as his fingers clench the knees of his slacks. The mental gymnastics needed to find himself genuinely shocked by Hannibal's rejection is impressively absurd.

"We have a connection," Franklyn argues, tears brimming around his pale pink waterlines.

Hannibal resists the urge to sigh, and instead calmly replies, "I have intimate knowledge of you. It's understandable that you might mistake—"

With his brow knitted, Franklyn shakes head, cutting the doctor off as he swipes at an errant tear, whinging, "Is this because of that slut?"

Hannibal's blood runs cold, his temper swiftly reaching steep, jagged heights. "To whom are you referring?"

Franklyn snuffles, his expression hideously twisting with misery. "That awful omega that threw himself at you at the soiree."

There's nothing that gives Doctor Hannibal Lecter away—no tell, not even a flinch, but there's a moment in time, a brief barely there second, where something vicious clicks into place and Hannibal shifts from man to monster, and he stares icily at Franklyn.

"I googled him," Franklyn says.

Admittedly, Hannibal has done the same. It had started out innocently enough. He googled the Minnesota Shrike and devoured every tidbit of information he could find about the killer, which inadvertently, albeit predictably, had Hannibal reading about Will.

There are snippets of court proceedings online, of a fifteen-year-old fresh-faced, teary-eyed Will Graham on the stand. Not even a single prick of stubble on his dewy, smooth skinned, jaw. His curls, tucked behind ears he hasn't quite grown into, fall lank at his shoulders, unwashed, while his flighty, bleary eyes meet no ones. He folds in on himself, wrapping his arms around his middle, his fingers gripping the fabric of his ill-fitted suit jacket so tightly they must ache with the pressure.

It was of little surprise to find that Special Agent Jack Crawford was heavily involved in the case, nor that Alana was overseeing Will's continued care, which as it turns out, was a court ordered indefinite stay at an undisclosed psychiatric hospital.

There are little to no articles in recent years regarding Will, no updates or mention of his release date. However, Hannibal did stumble upon an article on Tattle Crime about Garret Jacob Hobbs' mother. She owned an old rundown little farmhouse in Wolf Trap, Virginia—no more than an hour drive from Baltimore, Hannibal had eagerly noted.

Presumably overwhelmed with grief from the knowledge that she raised a serial killing son that abducted and killed eight omegan boys, turning them into trinkets and rumored to snack on them too, she carried herself on bare feet through a field of tall, windswept grass that just about reached her knees. She hanged herself from a lone apple tree that was bright with

blossoms. She and Garret had planted that tree together when he was only a small child. Hannibal recognizes the sentiment, but is ultimately bored by it.

One of the pictures of the property contained part of a blurry street number. With only a sprinkle of due diligence and the help of Google Maps, Hannibal found the complete address and wasted no time combing through the available public records. A triumphant little grin had creased his stony features as he found that one mister Will Graham is now on the title.

It's when the lights are off and nobody is home, that Hannibal stands in front of Will's house finding himself almost charmed. The nearest neighbor is a few miles out which Hannibal genuinely sees the appeal of. However, that's not what caught his attention or tickled his fancy. Mrs. Hobbs hadn't kept up with the land or the house—the images online had made it seem more of an overgrown shack, vines of ivy creeping up its grimy exterior walls. *Yet*, Will, with his strong capable hands, can evidently work miracles.

The house isn't quite to Hannibal's taste, but it is quaint, even picturesque with the long winding gravel drive, salted and cleared of snow, that leads to a sprawling front porch the length of the house, recently washed, sanded, and painted white—perhaps sometime during the previous summer—while the shutters are a soft powder blue, same as the empty window planters.

Hannibal climbs the two uneven steps onto the porch, sturdy freshly laid floor boards beneath his tan brogues. To one side is a raw cedar porch swing, sawdust still scattered about on the floor from the holes Will had drilled above, anchoring the chain of the swing. Hannibal runs a finger along the armrest, dusty wood not quite sanded to perfection, nor has it been stained or painted. Hannibal suspects Will crafted the swing himself and has yet to decide how to finish.

While many alphas with their delicate masculinities wouldn't appreciate Will's interest—and apparent talent—for manual labor, Hannibal admires the craftsmanship, which one might closely relate to art. One might also interpret Will's actions as nesting, preparing a home, getting it ready for a mate and future children. Traditionally, it's an alpha that provides the home, and along with it safety, both of which Hannibal is more than willing and able to give, but there is nothing traditional about Will Graham.

Will doesn't *need* an alpha, he can take care of himself, and Hannibal respects that. Admires it even.

Hannibal peers through one of the two large gridded picture widows—panes divided by muntins—that sit on either side of the front door. A stone mantle sits center of the far-left wall, orange embers softly aglow in the fireplace. Shelves, devoid of any personal artifacts beyond a sparse collection of books, frame the mantel's sides.

Hannibal expected to find a dog or two, perchance even three. He feels a cloud of discontentment roll over him as he spots not three, not even four, but *five* dogs dozing in their respective beds near the foot of the mantel.

Hannibal internally sighs, he hasn't the temperament for pets. They require a certain level of compassion for their upkeep, neither of which Hannibal is predisposed to. His darling sister

Mischa was, of course. She was forever bringing home all sorts of injured, lost, or sickly creatures to nurse back to health.

When she was about six years of age, she found a stray mutt that had wandered onto their estate. She'd named it Draugas and had coddled it for a time. She fed it scraps from her meals, parts she didn't like—sneaking pieces under the table cloth, dropping tidbits to the floor where the dog laid beneath dangling wriggling toes.

Hannibal used to steal those bits off her plate when mother and father weren't looking, eating them for her, so she wouldn't get scolded for not finishing her meal

At night, Hannibal no longer heard the pitter patter of her small delicate feet as she rushed down the ornate hallway, through double mahogany doors, and across his room. She'd tip toe over a silk Isfahan run, and hold her breath as she crawled up into his fourposter bed with him in search of warm, comforting snuggles that chased away her fear of the dark.

He'd groggily encircle his arms around her, pretending she had woken him even though every night he'd lie in wait, unable to sleep without the steady in and exhale of her breath or the cling of her small fingers to his night shirt. But now she'd haul Draugas into bed with her and bury her cherubic face into fur, getting all the comfort she needed from a *dog*.

It was late afternoon following a bright spring day when Hannibal caught Draugas nipping at the skirt of Mischa's dress a little too roughly for his liking. As it yipped and yelped, Hannibal had dragged it by the scruff through the gardens, Mischa running after them on her short stubby legs, shouting at him to stop in her tiny sweet voice—cheeks pudgy and pink, tear stained and warm.

Hannibal found a sizeable rock and after three good whacks, Draugas was no more.

Mischa had tearily insisted through hyperventilated sobs that the dog had just been playing. On some level, Hannibal knew this, but all he'd needed was the slightest excuse. He'd never admit it out loud since it pains him to even admit it to himself, but he'd been jealous of that dog.

Mischa was allowed to spread her love and nurture whatever creature she so desired for without she'd wither like cornfields in a draught, but Hannibal had to be her favorite, to be her number one, be the thing she loved, adored, and *needed* most of all. Hannibal needed her to need him.

It comes as no surprise that Hannibal has the same want for Will to need him, for his happiness to depend entirely upon the alpha, for just the good doctor's presence to ignite euphoria in Will. Hannibal has had many lofty aspirations over the years, but now he endeavors to be the air Will breathes and the blazing sun that Will's world orbits. He wants to be Will's *everything*.

Suffice it to say, slaughtering Will's dogs is Hannibal's initial instinct. *However*, killing Draugas the way Hannibal had didn't have Mischa throwing herself into his awaiting arms as he'd intended. It had quite the opposite effect, at least for some time. So, with Will being the sensitive, empathetic soul that is he is, Hannibal speculates he'll catch more flies with honey.

Hannibal had come prepared for such a scenario. He glances down at the glass travel container he carries in his left hand. It's full to the brim with chopped, finely spiced sausage—on the edge of expiry—made from a sprightly blond with an abysmal work ethic and the stickiest of fingers. Hannibal had spent the better part of an evening grinding scraps of her—waste not, want not—and tightly encased them in the sub-mucosa of her small intestine.

Hannibal grips the winter cool metal doorknob and pushes forward. Will hadn't bothered to lock the front door—not a good habit for an omega as pretty as him to have. Hannibal excuses it for now. It's somewhat reasonable to think a house with five dogs there to protect it would be safe from predators.

It's not, but that's a discussion for a later date.

As the door creaks open and Hannibal steps silently through the threshold of Will's home, the dogs' heads lift from their beds, hackles rising, even on the littlest one—a rotund, well fed Jack Russel Terrier.

Hannibal wastes no time tossing them a few bits of sausage. They sniff at it warily, but when deemed safe for consumption they are quick to devour those bite size pieces. Tails begin wagging, the two largest dogs lumber their way close, while the smallest scurry underfoot. The tri-color Border Collie—the only one with some sense—hangs back, hackles still raised, teeth bared, tail nervously tucked, a low growl emanating from deep in its throat.

Unconcerned, Hannibal bends at the knee and holds out a hand, a pile of sausage balanced precariously in palm. It's a shepherd that finds himself bravest, a ghostly white except for the russet brown ear. Hannibal spies a tag hanging from a black leather collar, gets close enough to take a peek.

“Hello, Jack,” Hannibal says, puzzled by the odd choice of name. Although, Special Agent Crawford is a bit of a dog himself and gobbles down Hannibal's offerings just the same.

Jack ignores Hannibal's voice in favor of a second mouthful of sausage, is busy barely chewing, mostly inhaling the meat as a square headed, short haired mutt—likely with some American Pit Bull Terrier interlaced in his scrambled DNA—shoves his way in, happily slobbering over Hannibal's palm as he gently nibbles at the rest. He's the same russet brown as Jack's ear, his burly chest a creamy white. He has his own tag hanging above it.

“Good morning, Harley,” Hannibal greets him, the dog's ears excitedly perking at the sound of his name.

The two smaller dogs scrabble close, the Jack Russel's stubby tail wags along with his whole back end, tag jingling. Hannibal gives the wiggly boy a piece of sausage as he moves the tag into view.

“A pleasure to meet you, Buster,” Hannibal says, giving the dog's withers a careful pat. It's not a bold-faced lie, but it's not strictly the truth either. Although, Hannibal can admit Buster's bonhomous nature isn't strictly off-putting, and could perhaps be labelled *cute*.

“And who might you be?” Hannibal asks the other little one, an unfortunate looking, beige curly haired thing with round watery eyes with tear stains below. She sits politely, shaggy tail brushing along the old oak floor as Hannibal checks her red, nylon collar.

“Good girl, Ellie,” Hannibal praises, feeding her bits of sausage, giving her more than the others simply because Hannibal appreciates her ladylike manners.

Lastly, having watched the pack safely receive treats, the Border Collie’s nerves begin to wane and he slinks nearer—Max, the front of his tag reads.

“It’s okay, Max,” Hannibal soothes. “I mean no harm.”

Max slinks to arm’s length, whale eyeing the good doctor. Hannibal reaches out, letting Max sniff at an empty hand. Hannibal would like to imagine that Max scents danger, predator, and imminent death if one wrong move is made. However, after a few tentative licks of Hannibal’s fingers, all that nervous energy uncoils from Max and his fluffy black tail, tipped with white, springs into view, swaying back and forth.

Max pushes his furry head into Hannibal’s palm in search of scratches, and while it isn’t the sort of thing Hannibal is wont to do, he curls his fingers behind one silky ear. He snaps the lid in place and sets down the container of sausage at his feet to free his left hand so he can pet Max with both.

Max shuffles forward, making a pleased little grumble of noise as Hannibal glides his fingers through the soft, long stands at the base of his neck, dipping fingers under the braided collar, delicately scratching the skin underneath.

Jack proves himself a jealous fiend. He noses at Hannibal’s forearm, trying to shove the doctor’s hand away from Max to get scratches of his own. In time, Harley snuffles around Hannibal’s face, scenting the alpha’s neck, dipping a damp nose into Hannibal’s hair, sniffing his way to an ear that he gives an overeager, slobbery lick.

Hannibal jerks away, which Harley interprets as play. He barrels forward, entirely unaware of his hefty weight, and lunges at Hannibal, knocking the alpha sideways onto the creaky oak floorboards, tufts of fur gathered in corners and under furniture.

It takes precious little time for Hannibal to be swarmed—cool, moist snouts and pink, wet, over-friendly tongues tickle his skin as shuffling paws, big and small, trounce all over him.

Hannibal roughly shoves at the whole lot of them as he rolls to his knees. It only serves to create more excitement. Jack playfully yanking at the sleeve of his wool coat, throwing Hannibal off balance as Harley headbutts him in his fervor for affection, slathering Hannibal with giddy canine kisses.

As for Ellie, she dances on her hind legs, jumping up at Hannibal’s waist while Max pushes his way under an arm, right into the curve of Hannibal’s armpit, hopeful for a squeeze and a cuddle.

Buster, smarter than he looks, is quick to spot an easy opportunity and tries to make a quick get away with the container of sausage, dragging it backwards, round little rump up in the air as his small paws scrabble against the slippery hardwood floor.

Hannibal stumbles to his feet, Harley glued to one side, his whip like tail swinging back and forth, while Jack mouths at his opposite hand, impatiently eager for attention.

“*Buster*,” Hannibal growls, the dog immediately taking heed, pausing his motions, hind legs just about touching his puffy, circular bed. “*Buster, no.*”

With beady little eyes, Buster looks up and across the room at Hannibal, for all the world looking as if he’s halfheartedly considering the alpha’s demand when he really, *really* doesn’t want to.

Buster’s attention drops back to the container as he licks at his chops.

“I liked her a lot more than you,” Hannibal ominously threatens, indecently petty. Buster’s gaze returns to Hannibal’s, the doctor baring his teeth, “*Leave it.*”

To Hannibal’s surprise, Buster actually does. The little dog turns his snout away from the container, shamefaced, and scurries into his bed, curling into a tight ball. As Hannibal looms dangerously over him, taking the treats away, Buster flops to his side and exposes his belly, his stubby nub of a tail going a mile a minute while staring guiltily up at the doctor.

“Naughty boy,” Hannibal admonishes with no real heat behind the words, leaning over and giving the dog’s belly a forgiving pat. “Just like your mother, I suspect.”

Hannibal shifts the container of sausage under one arm as he stands upright, turning to observe the rest of the cluttered room, spotting a tall wooden dresser and a thin lumpy mattress perched on a cheap metal bed frame, a grey scratchy woolen blanket folded neatly at the foot of it.

Will sleeps in this room, he must. Hannibal knows there are bedrooms on the second floor, yet Will chooses to be near the warmth of the hearth, surrounded by pack. It makes sense for not only a lone omega, but perchance a lonely omega too. Will has to know what’s missing, for every pack needs an alpha.

Hannibal crosses the room, stepping over a discarded boat motor, it’s bits and bobbles lying haphazardly around it, and makes his way to a rickety old desk, antique liquor and soda bottles lining the back of it. At the forefront is an open fly making kit, feathers and hooks of all varieties on display. What catches Hannibal’s attention are the few completed ones abandoned on the right side of the desk—pretty little things with the hair of a deer attached.

Hannibal lifts a fly, getting a closer look, eyeing it appreciatively, wondering if Will had sourced the course hair himself. He’d never imagined an omega would ever have a strong enough constitution for such a thing as hunting, but Hannibal has this feeling, an excited little inkling, that Will Graham will never cease to amaze him.

Hannibal pockets the fly as he turns around, heading for the next room, passing by a stand holding half a dozen or so fishing rods. He pays them absolutely no attention, his mind settling on thoughts of Will slicing open the belly of a great, big buck—fantasies cut short as he happens upon the kitchen, Max, along with the rest of the pack sluggishly in tow, claws clicking along the floor with each step and tails contentedly swishing behind them.

The kitchen is bright and airy, dated by decades, and normally the latter would be a cause for some woe, but Hannibal finds his heart all aflutter when in the *heart* of Will's home he finds the table strewn with pictures of the Ripper's many gruesome, yet delightful, beautifully macabre displays. Not only that, pinned to the white of the refrigerator door with a plain square magnet is Hannibal's stark, black business card.

Will hasn't forgotten about any facet him, and has in fact, *perhaps*, been obsessing just the same as Hannibal. While Will may not have connected those facets of him as of yet, Hannibal is hopeful that the pretty, bright brained omega is at least slightly suspicious.

There's a beaten up, spiral notebook that Will has left open atop the pictures. Hannibal doesn't hesitate to take a peek, leaning over the faint-ruled paper, squinting as he attempts to read the barely legible chicken scratch Will calls writing,

-Hubristic. Egotistical. Cruel. demigod level of superiority. Definitely an alpha.

-Methodical/meticulous. Sophisticated. Refined and well educated. High society. Very wealthy.

-Handsome? Most likely.

-Lonely but can't relate. Can't empathize? Little feeling. Psychopath? Seeks a companion. Friend? Mate? Either or? Not driven by sexual urges. Asexual? doubtful.

-Driven by feel? Wants to feel? Killing makes him feel?

-sees victims as prey, not people. Pigs?

-He can't relate to pigs—uncultured? Do they annoy him? Disgust him?

-is everyone prey? Everyone pigs?

-First victims—Annapolis, Essex, Baltimore. sounders of 3? Not anymore. Too many. WHY? Boredom?

-elevates them to art

- A performance? He's performing—expressing himself.

-Art makes him feel?

-he's theatrical. Elegant. ~~Brutal~~ brutalization of 'pigs' are done with grace. Posthumously? No. He's punishing them. WHY?

- are displays a public shaming? the dissections to disgrace them? WHY???

-Removal of organs + abdominal mutilations = anatomical and surgical knowhow. Doctor? Surgeon?

-missing organs. Black market? Not a chance. Trophies? Unlikely. Too pedestrian, thinks himself better than that.

At the bottom of the page, on the right-hand corner, is a rough little sketch of a peacock feather.

“I knew there was something off about him,” Franklyn righteously says, ripping Hannibal away from his reverie. “You’ve always told me to trust my gut. I should have listened.”

The good doctor suddenly wonders what Franklyn would look like with his ribs severed from his spine and his lungs torn through the back of him, worn as wings. Less of a blood eagle, Hannibal figures, and more of irritating fruit fly that’s too fat for flight.

“What does your gut tell you, Franklyn?” Hannibal questions, unblinking. He stares at Franklyn, imagining horror after magnificent horror he could unleash upon the cretinous, neurotic omega.

Franklyn’s waning tears have become a virtue signal that he paws at, rubbing the remnants of them away. He outstretches an arm toward the alpha and Hannibal robotically lifts a box of tissues, leaning forward with it so the omega can tug one free.

Franklyn dabs at his nose, mumbling, “He murdered his step-father.” He crumples the tissue in his fist and drops it on the glass side table before meeting Hannibal’s inscrutable gaze. “I’m afraid of him. I think you should be, too.”

“He killed the Minnesota Shrike in self-defense,” Hannibal replies. “Some might say he’s a hero.” Hannibal hopes he isn’t.

Franklyn grows frustrated. “You think I’m jealous.”

“Are you?”

Franklyn shakes his head as he rubs his assuredly clammy hands along the length of his wide thighs. “I have no reason to be.”

With empty, fathomless eyes, Doctor Lecter watches Franklyn squirm, locking them viciously on Franklyn’s undignified, distressed gaze, and holds it tightly while casually remarking, “Will Graham is superior to you in every conceivable way.”

Franklyn’s eyes widen with unrepentant shock and he opens his unprepossessing mouth, probably to object, but Hannibal smoothly lifts an elegant wrist, glancing at the clock on his sleek, silver Zenith watch, a brown alligator leather strap keeping it in place, saying, “Unfortunately, we are all out of time for today.”

Chapter 8

Seconds tick sluggishly into minutes. Minutes crawl lifelessly into hours. Hours fester by, slowly and tortuously turning into days. Those days becoming long, lackluster weeks. While those weeks unfurl into one ugly and lonesome month.

However, Hannibal isn't one to sit idly by and deprive himself. It's only natural that a monster such as Hannibal seek out the object of his desire. So, he's been watching, learning, biding his time as he plans something special just for *his* omega.

As it turns out, Will Graham is the type of omega that uses the same coffee mug for a week without washing it. He leaves wet towels on the bathroom floor, the lid off his toothpaste, and draws smiley faces in the dust his shelves collect.

His kitchen cabinets are mostly bare save for a few boxes of cereal, stale spices, and the mismatched vintage Corelle dishes. The refrigerator isn't much better with its shriveled greens and old take-out containers full of fuzzy, half eaten foods.

Even though he lets soiled dishes sit in the sink for an excessively unreasonable time, he neatly folds his clean laundry, arranging the items by color in his drawers.

Will drives an old pale blue station wagon with Virginia plates that Hannibal would rather burn than ever ride in. Its cloth seats are covered in fur and smell just as such. Will doesn't seem to notice.

There's also an old barn out back that Will has converted into a garage. The inside looks as if the remnants of a hurricane, yet Will knows exactly where everything is and he tinkers for hours, using an old, fire hazard of a space heater to keep the area relatively habitable.

Rain or shine, sleet or snow, every day, at some point or another, Will wanders his way into the woods with his feisty pack of mongrels. Sometimes he fishes in the river that runs through his property, though mostly he just walks—his perfectly perfect masculine hands hidden away in fluffy pockets made of down while a beige woolen beanie protects his head from the cold, a plaid scarf wrapped inelegantly around his neck.

The nights are Hannibal's favorite. The lights are off and a fire blazes in Will's hearth. For all but two, the dogs sleep soundly in their beds. The littlest amongst them, Buster and Ellie, lie at Will's feet where the omega sits at the dining table surrounded by pictures of the many and various and particularly gruesome murders belonging to the Chesapeake Ripper.

Flickering candles line the counter, barely illuminating the kitchen, casting a wonderfully eerie glow over Will's pretty skin and handsome scruff. He sifts through the images for *hours*, sometimes writing notes, though more often than not he just looks and looks and *looks*, eyes occasionally straying to Hannibal's business card stuck to the fridge.

Will stays there until the lids of his lovely eyes get heavy, and unsurprisingly, he sleeps in that awful bed in the living room surrounded by his canine companions. The bed creaks,

springs squeaking as he sinks into it. He goes to bed alone, yet throughout the night, the dogs slowly gather around him on the bed and he always wakes with his face buried in a mound of fur.

It's a blustery bone-chilling Sunday morning, the sun not yet risen, when Will startles awake. It isn't the howling of the wind that has him rising, but rather his phone ringing beneath his pillow where he'd tucked it the night before.

He's barely conscious as he accepts the call, pressing the cellphone to his ear as he buries his face into the fluffy fur of Max's scruff.

"What?" Will grumbles, voice sleep-rough and raspy.

There's a brief moment where Will's fingers clench the phone and then he's bursting upright, startling all of his dogs to attention.

"You're sure it's the Ripper?" Will asks, shooing his dogs away so he can throw the blankets off his lap. "You're on your way? Fifteen minutes? Yeah, I can be ready."

Will stands on bare clumsy feet, silently ushering his dogs toward the door, letting them out to do their business.

"Okay," Will says into the phone. "Yeah. Sure. Bye."

With what Hannibal can only describe as excitement, Will tosses his phone onto the bed in his flurry to rush out of the room, muttering, "About fucking time," while a small unanticipated smile creases his beatific features.

Will eats cereal from a mug—all his bowls waiting for a wash in the sink—as he sets out food for the dogs and puts fresh water in all their respective dishes.

The dogs start scratching at the door while Will is brushing his teeth. He hurries out of the bathroom, electric toothbrush buzzing away as he lets them in. It gets left at the foot of the bed when Will is distracted by toweling wet paws and snowy fur.

Hannibal, the gentleman that he is, keeps his gaze respectful as Will tugs off his grey oversized thermal shirt, trading it for a faded sage green Henley. That being said, only a blind man wouldn't notice all the splendid lean lines, nor the strong musculature of his arms.

Will, the pretty little tornado that he is, leaves his sweats on the floor, zipping up his canvas foundation pants, the color of camel, which is when Special Agent Crawford arrives and immediately and impatiently starts honking his horn, setting the dogs into a frenzy.

Will gently shushes them, giving them pats. He crouches down, offering hugs, and too Hannibal's supreme disgust, kisses on their muzzles. The dogs, with tails wildly wagging, happily and eagerly smother Will with their own affection.

Will doesn't lock the door when he leaves, but when he's halfway to the Chevy, he seems to realize he's forgotten something and comes breezing back through the house. He leaves wet

boot prints across the living room floor, trailing them into the kitchen where he snatches Hannibal's business card off the fridge, shoving it into a pocket.

Will hurries his way back out, though pokes his head in through the door as he's just about to close it. He eyes his dogs that are staring melancholically back at him, knowing they're being left.

"You lot be good," Will tells them.

He just about shuts the door, yet hesitates. He opens it again, taking a few steps in, and for a moment he's petting furry heads and rubbing silky ears, mumbling, "I'll miss you guys."

As he backs away, hand on the doorknob, he gazes at them tenderly, saying, "Momma loves you."

Then he's slamming the door behind himself, jumping off the porch, jogging partway down the driveway, and disappearing into Jack's vehicle.

#

In less than twenty-four hours, the Chesapeake Ripper's latest kill is all over the news, and in all honesty, Hannibal couldn't be more pleased with himself. He celebrates by hosting a dinner for Jack and Alana under the guise of commiseration.

Considering he's among friends, Doctor Lecter keeps the affair as casual as his ego will allow. Which is it say, hardly casual at all. He decorates the table with vivacious yellow carnations and the large recurved horns of a male ibex. He does, however, forego a waistcoat and settles for a striking black suit jacket over a stark white pinstripe dress shirt, all of which fits phenomenally well if Alana's lingering—verging on loitering—gaze is anything to go by.

Hannibal politely smiles at Alana when he catches her sights on him. She smiles back, eyes twinkling prettily in the low-light of the chandelier, plush red lips kept closed because she'd just taken a bite of her meal. Pretty though her powder blue eyes may be, they are also completely devoid of any misgivings, of any knowledge that she's chewing on Jeremy Olmstead, the Ripper's latest victim.

Hannibal smiles a little wider.

The good doctor sits at the head of the table, Alana to his left and Jack to his right who prattles on about nothing in particular. It's not like the agent to talk so inanely, but his cheeks are getting ruddy and his third glass of wine is just about empty. Hannibal diligently pours him a fourth since the alpha well knows that the more alcohol he plies Jack with, the looser his lips get.

Jack gives him a funny look—a playful mockery of suspicion. "If I didn't know better, Doctor, I'd say you're trying to get me drunk."

Hannibal chuckles as he lifts his own glass, giving it a swirl and a slight inhale through his nose before jovially saying, "I'm trying to get us *all* drunk." He takes a large unrepentant

swig. “There’s a coldblooded killer on the loose.”

Jack makes a noise that is almost a growl, though more akin to a grumble. He gulps down a third of his wine, holding the glass in one hand as he spears flakey pastry along with a tidbit of Jeremy’s kidney on his fork.

“They’re calling it the wound man,” Jack tells Hannibal, pressing the food into his mouth. He chews thoughtfully for a moment, eyes briefly fluttering as he sighs a little hum of content. He seems to quickly remember himself though, and quietly scowls, eyes hardening. “You should have seen it.”

“I’m glad you didn’t,” Alana butts in.

Hannibal’s attention shifts her way. She has one of Hannibal’s home-brewed beers in hand, a French-tipped nail clinking on the side of the brown bottle—an anxious little tick.

Alanna’s gaze, however, is on Jack—pointed and accusing. “It was heinous.”

Special Agent Crawford very much looks like he wants to roll his eyes, but instead he takes another heaping gulp of wine. “Will can handle it.”

Hidden under shirt sleeves, the skin of Hannibal’s arms pebble at the sound of Will’s name being spoken, and while he doesn’t physically show it, his lungs feel tight in his chest and his heart beats a little faster.

“An omega has no business looking at crime scenes,” Alana argues.

This time Jack does roll his eyes. They land on Alana, creased with irritation. “I think we can all agree that Will isn’t the average omega.”

While Hannibal curtly nods in agreeance, just a slight dip of his chin. Alana sighs, pressing the lip of the beer bottle to her crimson mouth, taking a sip, head tilted slightly back, exposing the pale line of her throat. It piques Hannibal’s curiosity. It makes him wonder if it would be physically possible to tear it out with just his teeth.

A messy endeavor to be certain. Practical? Not so much.

As the bottle clinks against the table, Alana lowering it, she says, “Will is especially sensitive. He’s so impressionable.”

“What he has is pure empathy,” Hannibal politely interjects and corrects. “He can assume your point of view,” he explains, tilting his glass Alana’s way, and then his own, “or mine, and even some other points of view that scare us.”

Alana purses her lips. They slowly tilt their way into a disgruntled frown.

Jack grunts in acknowledgement of Alana’s pained expression, washing down a mouthful of kidney pie with wine. “Will gave Doctor Lecter quite the show.”

Alana turns her dismayed gaze from Jack to Hannibal. “Did he?”

Hannibal nods once again, and while he's able to keep his expression entirely neutral, he's unable to keep the praise from his words. "Will Graham is a remarkable young man."

Alana is becoming noticeably agitated. She swallows in discomfort, throat bobbing, giving Hannibal quite the urge to careen forward, gnash his teeth around it, and *tear*.

"You wish to study him?" Alana questions, almost hopeful, because to her, the alternative is worse.

Jack snorts into his wine glass, eagerly swallowing the last mouthful of it. Hannibal dutifully refills the man's glass as the agent remarks, "There's nothing professional about his interest. Is there Doctor Lecter?"

Hannibal meets Jack's gaze, one of the agent's thin black eyebrows lifted, and for all of Jack Crawford's usual judgmental superiority, Hannibal can't find it. Jack actually looks amused, like he thinks Hannibal has a crush and it's *funny*.

On the other hand, Alana looks ravaged by betrayal—heart on a platter in a dozen shattered pieces. She doesn't at all realize that the way she's looking at him, so exposed, so vulnerable, just makes Hannibal *hungry*.

Hannibal isn't usually the sort to be so forthright, though at the end of the day, he's but a flesh and blood alpha. He's quite naturally and abundantly territorial, and while Hannibal can't yet yell from rooftops that Will is his, he can at least hook his claws in.

So, Hannibal smiles this school boy thing, aiming to hide his feigned embarrassment behind his glass of wine as he takes a meager sip, admitting, "Certainly not."

Jack laughs boisterous and loud, something Hannibal has never heard before considering Jack is *never* happy, too consumed he is by corpses and their murderers at large.

Despite Alana's pale, radiant skin, her lush lips, and the pretty tumble of her hair, she appears positively sour. She's stewing, pickling herself in jealousy—it couldn't be more obvious when she says, "He's not your usual type."

By 'usual,' Alana means accomplished, age-appropriate *women*. Hannibal has never been public with a man, omega or otherwise, and while he's had a handful of dalliances, they've never been public knowledge. It would put a severe damper on his reputation. Bigots, as it turns out, really don't like buggery, and even those who claim to have an open mind, often don't.

Needless to say, Hannibal had kept his affairs with men both brief and private. However, there are exceptions to every rule, and Hannibal suspects he'd throw his reputation on a pyre, watch all its magnificence burn, if it meant Will being his mate.

Doctor Lecter turns his entire focus on Alana, and while he is assuredly a monster in the ghastliest regard, he is also unreservedly charming. He smiles handsomely at Alana while his cruel, fathomless eyes are masked with a captivatingly gracious twinkle.

“You are my dearest friend, Alana,” Hannibal says, attempting to ease her fragile ego and reassure her of her importance. As he holds her gaze, he lets his own turn appreciative. “Surely you must have noticed remarkable is indisputably my type.”

Alana smiles, idiotically forgiving and entirely smitten, and while that is the exact reaction Hannibal desired, he still wants to slice the expression off her face.

“Are you calling me remarkable, Doctor Lecter?” Alana coquettishly queries.

Hannibal much feels the need to roll his own eyes now. He doesn’t of course. He can’t. But he does use his fork to carefully place a bite of kidney pie into his mouth, savoring the taste of pastry and Jeremy Olmstead.

He politely chews, swallows, and forces himself to say, “If I had, I would have simply been stating the obvious.”

Jack lightheartedly speculates, “Maybe I should be taking my leave?”

Hannibal chuckles, eyes alight as he meets Jack’s. “Of course not,” Hannibal replies much to Alana’s thinly veiled irritation. “There’s still dessert to be had. You *must* try my sorbet.”

#

Much later that night, when Jack has been carted off in a taxi and the table is cleared, Hannibal discards his jacket, rolls up his sleeves and washes the dishes while Alana dries. They work in a comfortable silence until he angles closer to Alana, eyeing her mischievously, and innocently requests, “Tell me of this wound man.”

She huffs out a laugh as she swipes a tea towel over the back of a plate. Her vision lands on the alpha, gazing at him fondly. She thinks his morbid curiosity is cute rather than the bright red, bloody flag that it is.

As Hannibal passes over another plate, she smiles demurely and finally relents, “It was unpleasantly similar to the surgical diagram.”

“Hence the title.”

She hums and nods. She glances away and halts her movements, absently focusing on the bubbles in the stainless-steel sink. “I can’t accurately describe the horror of it.”

“And what of good Will?” Hannibal responds, unflinching. “How did he describe it?”

With an ugly little frown marring her porcelain features, Alana’s attention brushes the side of Hannibal’s face. He lowers the cloth in his hand, wrings it out, and places it on the granite countertop beside the sink. He turns his head, looking her directly in the eye as she says, “He was practically giddy.”

Hannibal blinks, looking away, and dips a hand into the warm soapy water to retrieve the plug. Alana mistakes his effort to not visibly emote his elation for apprehension, and as she steps away to put the plates in their respective cupboards, she tiredly sighs, “I know...”

Hannibal dries his hands on the pressed, dark blue tea towel Alana left behind. He neatly folds it, and upon her return from across the kitchen, she stands in front of him. She gently takes the towel and carelessly drops it on the counter, replacing it with her hand, curling her slim fingers around Hannibal's.

Alana's almond eyes become round and earnest as she gazes up at him. "I wish you had told me." Hannibal furrows his brow and cants his head ever so slightly to one side, not quite understanding. She squeezes his hand. It's meant to comfort, but Hannibal hasn't the faintest clue as to why.

"When you broke things off between us," Alana says, smiling a faint sad smile, "It didn't make any sense to me." Hannibal nods along, trying to urge her toward the point. "Now it does."

Hannibal gives her a wry, entirely feigned look of approval. "You've found clarity."

She lets out a huff of breath, glancing down, dipping her chin, dark glistening locks that smell of artificial roses fall forward in front of her face. With his free hand, Hannibal tucks one side of Alana's hair behind her ear, her eyes tearily flicking to him.

She squeezes his hand again, not harshly, but almost. "Do you prefer the male form?"

Hannibal contemplates the merits of letting Alana believe he's a homosexual. It would be doing her broken heart and bruised ego a great kindness, truly. Hannibal, however, is the Chesapeake Ripper. Kindness isn't his forte.

"I appreciate beauty in all its forms."

Alana huffs out a disbelieving breath as she gathers herself closer, cupping Hannibal's cheeks, sweetly pushing the hair that had fallen across his forehead to the side. She gazes at Hannibal, heart on her sleeve. "You've always had *very* particular tastes, Hannibal." She brushes a delicate thumb across the sharp ridge high on his cheek. "Be honest with me."

"Alana..." Hannibal sighs.

Alana nods, eyes forlorn, but nowhere devoid of caring. She cares too much. "You know I could *never* love you any less, right?"

As if to test that theory, Hannibal says, "I want Will."

Alana instantly grows cold, pulling away. She strides partway across the kitchen and helps herself to another beer from Hannibal's fridge. She peers at Hannibal from where she stands, sipping her beer. It's a scrutinizing sort of stare. She's also trying to remain level headed when she likely wants to yell.

"Will Graham is the single worst decision you could ever make," She eventually says.

"I'm not convinced of that," Hannibal tells her.

Alana squeezes the brown bottle she holds, and very seriously states, “He will *ruin* you, Hannibal.”

It’s this moment that Hannibal’s phone rings on the island counter between them. Hannibal briefly contemplates ignoring it, but it rings in the tone of his work line. It could very well be a patient in distress and he would not be as highly regarded as he is if he let emergency calls go unanswered.

Alana takes a drink of her beer, proceeding to dispassionately cross her arms as she watches Hannibal go to his phone.

The caller ID reads, ‘Unknown.’ Nevertheless, Hannibal doesn’t hesitate to swipe the round green button and press the phone to his ear, “Doctor Hannibal Lecter speaking.”

“Good evening, Doctor Lecter.” For a very brief moment Hannibal freezes, completely taken aback by the wondrous, melodically masculine nature of Will’s voice. His memories hadn’t done it justice.

Hannibal doesn’t think, just moves, makes his way for the exit, barely glancing at Alana as he says, “I’m sorry. You’ll have to excuse me.”

“Do you have company?” Will queries as Hannibal none too elegantly rushes down his hall, past the dining room, and tucks himself into his home office—more of a den.

“Alana Bloom,” Hannibal casually responds while closing the heavy dark wood French doors for privacy. He crosses the room, pulling out the chair at his desk to sit.

“At this hour?” Will teases. “I hope I didn’t interrupt anything.”

“We were speaking about you actually.”

Will groans, but it’s happy and playful. “Only good things I hope.”

“On the contrary.”

Will snorts out a laugh and it is so charmingly endearing that Hannibal’s gruesome, rotten heart *aches* with warmth. The monster in Hannibal wants to wrap its grisly arms around Will and *squeeze* the life, the bright yellow summer light, right into himself. He wants to taste it, breath it in, rub the sound of Will’s laughter right into his pores so he can absorb the vibrations, have it become a part of him, become the only heavenly thing about him.

“She was displeased with me today,” Will tells him, no less amused.

“Because the Ripper’s latest kill excited you?”

“It *enthralled* me.”

Hannibal swallows, holding his breath. “The Wound Man enthralled you, Will?”

“Is that what they’re calling him?” Will rhetorically questions. “He was certainly wounded.”

“And dead.”

“*Oh*,” Will chuckles, “completely and utterly.”

“And what about that enthralled you?”

Will hums in consideration. “In all honesty, Doctor Lecter, it made me think of you.” There are so many ways Will could mean his words that Hannibal hasn’t the time to decipher. Luckily, he doesn’t need to because Will continues, “I imagined you in Olmstead’s place, reshaped by my hands. I thought about poking holes in all that armor you wear, all those layers—I googled you, you know? So many fucking layers.”

There is a very specific way Will makes Hannibal’s heart race, his blood pump, forcing the sickliest desire to creep through his veins. “Is that what the Ripper did to Olmstead? He was peeling back layers?”

“No,” Will is laughing again, and this time at Hannibal, the doctor suspects. “He’s frustrated. That display, the brutality of it, was attention seeking.” Hannibal can hear Will take a drink of something, water maybe, then as an afterthought, Will adds, “I think peeling back your layers would feel like Christmas.”

“*Will...*” Hannibal cannot keep the fondness from his voice, the appreciation.

“Did you miss me, Doctor Lecter?”

Hannibal weighs the pros and cons of denial. He decides on honesty if only for the fact that it is all he wants between them. “Terribly, brutally so.”

Will makes a noise, and if Hannibal isn’t mistaken, which he rarely is, Will sounds pleased. “I’ve wanted to call, but—”

“—You have.”

Hannibal can hear the smile in Will’s voice as he says, “I wanted to call *sooner*, but you’re a *terribly, brutally* bad idea.”

Hannibal also smiles, it’s small, barely there at all, yet still awfully smitten. “So are you.”

“You’re an ancient old man,” Will jestingly despairs.

For some odd reason, Hannibal truly adores how preciously rude Will can be. “I can’t even order you a glass of chardonnay.”

“Everyone would think I’m a gold-digging *whore*,” Will complains.

Hannibal is genuinely surprised by the laugh the bursts forth from himself. The good doctor grins. It feels strange and out of place, but he lets it stay as he says, “In contrast, everyone would think I am taking advantage of the naivety of your youth, and of course, using you for your body.”

“They’ll think less of you for being with another man.”

Hannibal thoughtfully hums. “And by virtue of being an omega, they already think less of you.”

“You don’t.”

“Certainly not,” Hannibal says. “I currently have you on quite a tall pedestal.”

Will lets out a breath. “I don’t care what people think.”

“Nor do I.”

“Hannibal...” Will breathes. Quiet. Hesitant. Though, lord have mercy, the sound of Hannibal’s name on Will’s tongue makes the alpha feel positively weak.

“Darling omega,” Hannibal affectionately responds.

Will makes a strangled little noise as he shuffles the phone, creating static. Will scrubs a hand over his face, Hannibal concludes, thinking he can hear the scratch of Will’s fingers comb through his overgrown stubble.

Hannibal imagines Will on the edge of his stiff, creaky bed, surrounded by his dogs. The only light illuminating him is from the hearth. He’s leaning forward, elbow on his thigh, hand tugging at his wild curls, the other holding the phone.

Will sucks in a deep breath, holding it a few seconds before exhaling. He clears his throat, and says, “I want to see you again.”

Chapter 9

Hannibal isn't used to this feeling. There had, of course, been times within Doctor Lecter's 42 years of life where he had high expectations for a certain date or time. On a few rare occasions he has even looked forward to something. However, this avid feeling is startlingly different.

Hannibal is thoroughly anticipating Will's arrival with an exuberance that was not formerly known to him. His heart is all aflutter, his core, the very nerves and fibers that make up his being are unusually restless. His fingers twitch. His foot wants to tap—he doesn't let it, Hannibal hasn't lost complete self-control. Although, while he should be keeping his hands busy by writing patient notes, he just sketches pretty little images of Will—the omega's hands, his gorgeous smile, those spellbinding all seeing eyes.

The curl of his unkempt hair.

The curve of his handsome, scruffy jaw.

The shape of his strong shoulders hidden by plaid.

Those perfect, *provocative* legs trapped by denim.

Hmm, perhaps not entirely innocent after all.

Nevertheless, the clock tirelessly ticks, the fire in his office hearth blazes on this frigid overcast day, and his calligraphy pen scratches against cardstock creating spectacularly beatific images of Will, all the while Franklyn unbecomingly chatters, of which Hannibal pays absolutely no mind to up until the moment the omega decides to mention, "I got back together with Tobias."

Hannibal immediately glances up from his most recent sketch of Will—snow glistening in Will's hair and eyelashes, a visual reminiscence of the night they met.

Hannibal easily recalls Tobias Budge simply because Franklyn spoke of little else for nearly a year, much of which was not altogether favorable. *Concerning* would be the right word for the brutal urges Tobias had confessed to Franklyn, but since Hannibal lacks that particular ability, it seems to present as morbid curiosity.

"Mister Budge frightens you."

Franklyn sighs, glancing down at his pudgy hands, watching them anxiously twist and tug at each other on his wide, unwholesome lap. "Everybody frightens me." His dull, boring brown eyes flick upwards at Hannibal, looking almost black in the dim light of Hannibal's office. "Except you."

Hannibal's curiosity evaporates and he blinks, exasperated, briefly contemplating the force it might take to embed his pen into Franklyn's inferior brain via the sphenoid bone. He can't,

unfortunately, bring fantasy to reality, so he pulls into place the best mask he has for appropriately concerned psychiatrist, leaning ever so slightly forward, narrowed eyes clear and focused on his patient.

“You had been contemplating reporting him to the authorities.”

Franklyn shakes his head, fuzzy jowls jiggling in a particularly unpleasant way. “Toby is harmless.”

In all honesty, the overwhelming abundance of stupidity this omega is plagued with is entirely too exhausting. If Tobias hasn’t yet killed, it’s only a matter of time, and it’s for that reason Hannibal wants to hit Franklyn. It’s a repugnant urge, but he has the distinct desire to hit the omega so fucking hard it might just knock some sense into him.

“You’re lonely and desperate,” Hannibal calmly says, never one sugar coat things.

“He wouldn’t hurt me.”

Hannibal doesn’t roll his eyes, but if he were a lesser man... “Of course, he would. You aren’t special.”

The omega flinches as if he’d been struck. It’ll have to do. “He says I am.”

“I know you better than anyone,” Hannibal reminds Franklyn, “Rest assured, he is lying.”

Franklyn’s shoulder’s droop and his chin dips, face falling into the palms of his thick, stubby fingered hands. He scrubs them over his plump cheeks, presses at his closed eyes, undoubtedly trying to physically hold back tears.

Doctor Lecter hasn’t the inclination to interrupt him and simply closes his notebook and sets it aside, crossing one leg over the other, waiting for the omega to pull himself together.

A few minutes pass, and when Franklyn finally emerges from his palms, his face is redder than usual, waterlines bright pink, attention squarely on Hannibal, unwavering. “I have a lot of love to give.”

Hannibal decides to relent, to show mercy if only for the fact that he’d loathe to see the abhorrently hideous sight of Franklyn crying. “I encourage you to save it for someone who would treasure such a...” It pains Doctor Lecter to say it, “*gift*.”

Evidently, Hannibal said precisely the wrong thing because Franklyn’s eyes alight with renewed fervor. “You believe my love to be a gift?”

Hannibal sighs.

#

Will is late, which quite frankly, shouldn’t surprise Hannibal. While tardiness *is* terribly rude, Hannibal can also appreciate the fact that while he’s dealing with what might very well be an

exceptionally intelligent omega, he's still a slightly scatterbrained 20-year-old young man who likely has never been on time to *anything* in his life.

Will Graham truly does seem the sort to enter a room last. Always reluctantly. Preferring not to be there at all, yet the tug of some curiosity or another would drag him further in, just like the tug drags Hannibal out to the parking lot. He'd already peeked behind the curtains in his office, having seen it empty, but wishful thinking or plain irrational hope had Hannibal making his way outside to check for himself.

The parking lot is predictably empty, save for a thick dusting of snow and Hannibal's Bentley. It had been plowed before his practice opened this morning, but the afternoon is coming to a close, and the snow has slowly accumulated throughout the day.

Hannibal steps further out into the snow wearing another one of his three-piece suits, the skin on the back of his neck pebbling. He should have put on a jacket, but he didn't intend to do anything other than go outside the door for a quick look around, and besides, it isn't the chill in the air that has his skin prickling.

Somebody is here. Somebody is watching. There's no fresh prints or tire treads to prove it, but Hannibal can sense it. There's a shift in the air, a general, instinctual feeling of not being alone, of eyes of other on him, needling him with ill begotten attention.

There's no sound, not even the crunch of snow under boots, that signals someone's approach. It's the piercing, frigid feeling of ice—a snowball Hannibal will come to recognize—smacking against the back of his neck that has him whirling around only to find Will standing a few feet away, cackling at the hilarious sight Doctor Hannibal Lecter apparently makes.

Hannibal swats at the snow stuck to his collar and dribbling down the inside of his shirt while staring, admittedly, a bit wide eyed at Will. The omega's even prettier than Hannibal remembers, his memory not at all doing the young man justice. His curls are fuller, more lustrous, eyes bluer and brighter, smile a thousand blazing watts of sunshine.

Hannibal doesn't even notice the untidy mustard stain on the thigh of Will's light blue jeans or the terrible brown corduroy jacket with the sherpa collar he wears. He just sees that astoundingly handsome face which throws Hannibal's entire world off kilter, makes him lose all sense of time and space, that is, up until the moment Will hurls another snowball at Hannibal.

Hannibal easily dodges, and when Will throws a third, snatches it right out of the air much to omega's amusement. Hannibal, at first, doesn't quite know what to do with it. He looks at it bit oddly, as if it were a foreign indecipherable object.

Then he hears Will say, "Well...?" and he takes that as a challenge. He hucks it right back, it hitting Will in the ribs as he twists away, laughing this husky riotous thing that makes Hannibal's insidious heart swell and the rest of him positively quiver with delight.

Will tears across the parking lot, leaning at times to dip his hands into the snow, forming a ball along the way. Hannibal does the same. They both throw at the same time. Will misses.

Hannibal's hits true, and in all honestly, a little too hard against Will's chest. It lands with an '*oomph*' of Will's breath, his eyes widening with fiery elation.

"Do that again." Hannibal truly can't tell if that's a dare or a request. It doesn't entirely matter since, either way, he's genuinely happy to oblige.

Will takes off again, slipping and sliding, feet moving too quick to get purchase on sleet and snow. Hannibal could easily catch him. He wouldn't have to run, or even briskly walk for that matter, but he allows Will to loop around the parking lot, chasing after him, throwing what Hannibal suspects to be purposefully ill aimed balls at each other.

Will slides his way around Hannibal's Bentley, which is when Hannibal throws a tight ball at Will's back. It hits with a *thunk*, Will grunting only to then burst out in laughter.

He grins over the sleek, black car, a thin layer of snow atop it, only to then duck behind the vehicle, out of sight. Hannibal rushes around it. Finds nothing. Hurries to the other side. Again, *nothing*. He drops down to his haunches, looking under the car to see if he can spot Will on one of the other sides.

Instead, he's caught entirely off guard. Just as Hannibal crouches, Will slides over the hood of the car—which the good doctor will be scandalized by later—and only glides slightly ungracefully onto his feet, but well enough to tackle the alpha's back, making them sprawl.

Will momentarily has the upper hand. Legs snaked around Hannibal's middle, one arm around his neck as he smashes a snowball to the top of Hannibal's head, rubbing it into the alpha's hair, making a complete mess of the murderer.

Hannibal growls, he could toss the omega off, though chooses the more polite option, rolling in Will's grip. They grapple, Will laughing, and Hannibal, despite himself, finds himself feeling particularly lighthearted.

It's easy enough to overpower Will, to flip him onto his back, straddling the omega, his lovely hands balled into fists and pinned in the snow. Will doesn't lose his smile though, just nods in defeat, stating, "You got me."

Hannibal hovers over him, and is truthfully made a bit dumbstruck by Will's beauty. He looks ethereal like this, lying in the snow, curls all askew, cheeks and the tip of his nose a fetching pink.

"Admiring the view?" Will's voice is teasing, and while an ounce of shame is what it should bring, it just has Hannibal's guts all tied up in knots, wanting little more than for Will to plunge his hands into his belly and detangle them.

Hannibal takes his surge of desperate want as his cue to lift himself up and off Will, but the moment he releases Will's hands, they spring forward, chilly fingers brushing over Hannibal's face, locking them in his damp, messy hair, chunks of snow still lingering, and tugs him down.

Under normal circumstances Hannibal might consider the cold seeping through his clothing and how the knees of his dress pants gather dirt and moisture, how filthy parking lot snow clings to himself just about everywhere, and how his hair must be ridiculously awry, but he can't concentrate on anything other than those brilliantly blue eyes staring back at him as he's pulled near.

Their noses bump and Will murmurs, "Blatantly ogling me. What do you have to say for yourself?"

"My apologies," Hannibal just about whispers, condensation rising from his breath. "In my defense, the view is extraordinarily handsome."

Will blushes quite prettily, and though his cheeks are already flushed, he presses his lips just so and though his eyes skirt away from Hannibal's, his grip tightens in his hair.

"I don't like flattery," Will says.

Between them, Hannibal uses his hands to tuck the top three buttons of Will's coat into their respective holes, attempting to stifle the cold from getting to Will's chest. "You mistake a confession for flattery," Hannibal tells him, sliding the top button into the place, just below Will's pleasantly scruffy chin.

Will's eyes flick back to Hannibal's. "A confession?"

Hannibal nods, smiling ever so faintly at the omega. "Admittedly, I am painfully smitten by your questionable charm, and wholly—" Hannibal wrinkles his brow, "albeit excessively, enamored by your masculine beauty."

Will huffs out a humored breath, giving the alpha a dry look. "Questionable charm?"

"Indeed. I daresay most would find your temperament devoid of charm, *and yet*, you dazzle me so."

Will's expression becomes unreadable, pinched, though pleased. Troubled, yet inspiringly fond.

Hannibal seeks to steal any apprehension Will might be feeling, and jovially remarks, "I wouldn't tussle in the snow with just any old omega."

That, as it turns out, is exactly the right thing to say. It has Will smiling a small, simple, gorgeous thing that somehow has a direct line to Hannibal's wicked heart, the organ just about being ripped from his chest when Will pulls him impossibly closer, their lips barely brushing, Will muttering, "Quit your yammering and fucking kiss me already."

Again, memories fail to meet expectation. Will's lips are sweeter, softer, breath warmer, hands stronger, holding Hannibal to him by the base of the alpha's skull. Considering Hannibal's hedonistic tendencies, he should have a tolerance for such things, but his senses are immediately overwhelmed. Every intricate note of Will, from laundry detergent to dog,

and the hidden omegan layers beneath, tear at Hannibal's instincts with sharp, serrated claws, blessing his olfactory and making the good doctor *want*.

All Hannibal can smell, all he can taste, all he can *feel*—hands gently cupping the sides of the omega's smooth neck, thumbs pressed along his jaw—is *Will*. Even between Hannibal's thighs, even under him, is Will—the omega's warmth creeping between layers and smothering the alpha in all sorts of rude awakenings. Ones that speak of need, and must have, and kill to keep.

Will has this way of smiling into kisses, which, for Hannibal, is like swallowing summer. The good doctor would stay just like this if it felt like even half an option, but the ground is ice and they are making a spectacle of themselves, and while under certain circumstances Hannibal is quite adamant about making public displays and spectacles of all sorts, this wouldn't reflect well on his practice.

He tries to pull away, but Will makes a noise of displeasure and encircles his arms around Hannibal, unwilling to part their kiss. Truthfully, Hannibal is beyond delighted, but, "Darling, you'll freeze."

After a few more kisses and some gentle prodding from Hannibal, Will relents, though it's not without complaint, "You're no fun. Where's your sense of adventure?"

With Hannibal on his feet, he leans down, their hands clasping so the alpha can pull Will up. "Not on the floor of this parking lot, I assure you."

Dusting off the snow from the backs of his thighs, Will grumbles, "Boring old man," albeit with a pretty little smile and twinkling, playful eyes.

Hannibal frowns at the knees of his dress pants, thinks they are a lost cause as he brushes away the debris. Though he glances at Will, saying, "You're refreshingly reckless."

As they start their short trek toward the entrance of the building, Will bumps his shoulder against Hannibal's, looking up at him. "I was worried you wouldn't be able to keep up."

Since Hannibal would gladly find any reason to make physical contact with Will, he places his hand on the small of Will's back as they climb the few stone steps that guide their way toward an ornate, handcrafted, wooden door.

"Already concerning yourself with my stamina, I see."

Hannibal holds open the door, Will unable to meet his gaze as he passes through, although the omega does give the Hannibal a boyishly playful shove, which in all honesty, the alpha is quite pleased with.

Hannibal lets Will slowly meander his way through the cozy waiting room. Eventually, he turns to Hannibal, asking, "No secretary?"

In a perfect world, Hannibal would tell Will all about how she didn't meet his expectations in anything other than taste and texture, but alas, he regrets having to fib, "She was predisposed

to romantic whims. Found her heart in the United Kingdom.”

“No shit,” Will says as Hannibal ushers him into his office, the omega’s eyes widening, darting all around. “Jesus,” he breathes, taking in the towering mezzanine and the overabundance of richly colored bound books. His attention flits here and there, to the high ceilings, the drawing table, the fanciful hearth, Hannibal’s desk, and all the extravagant décor. “Franklyn wasn’t wrong. I really can’t afford you.”

As Will moves further into the room, Hannibal follows, “If it’s any consolation, for a few select patients, I’ve been known to work pro bono.”

Will turns, looking over his shoulder at Hannibal with glittering eyes. “I bet you say that to all the pretty, mentally ill omegas.”

Hannibal can’t help it, he smiles, even softly chuckles, which apparently, he should do more often because the grin Will sports because of it is positively glowing.

“Have you ever slept with a patient?” Will nosily inquires, dragging a chair near the fire, careless of the hardwood floors.

“No,” Hannibal answers honestly. Although, he has eaten a fair few. In terms of ethics and morality, he supposes that’s worse.

Will grabs another chair, placing it across from the first. He flops into the former, leaning his head back, closing his eyes, enjoying the heat from the flames. “If that’s how we met, you being my psychiatrist, do you think I’d have been able to seduce you?”

There’s a very obvious answer to that question, but Hannibal hesitates to answer. “I struggle to imagine a world where you’d have any sexual interest in an alpha who’s been tasked to psychoanalyze you.”

Will opens his eyes, lazily looking Hannibal’s way. “How keenly observant you are, Doctor Lecter.”

Hannibal pretends the praise is meaningless despite feeling in reverberate in his bones, making him feel weak in the knees. “I imagine it would be *I* that would be doing the seducing.”

Will grins at this, it’s both devilish and heavenly. “How terribly unethical of you. How would you do it?”

Hannibal can’t very well say through alienation, many masterful murders, and a heaping handful of manipulation, so he excuses himself to tidy up, finding his reflection a bit of a fright. He abandons his rumpled suit jacket, rights his tie, and folds the sleeves of his dress shirt partway up his forearms. He does his best—as he always does—with his hair, combing it back, making it as presentable as possible considering Will’s abuse of it.

Hannibal returns to Will with two porcelain mugs of hot cocoa. The omega has also shed a layer which he’d dropped on the floor at his feet, leaving his torso and arms covered

unflatteringly in flannel and plaid.

Will cautiously takes a mug from Hannibal, eyeing it skeptically, finding it perfectly adequate, and upon his first taste, hums in delight.

“There’s liquor in this,” Will muses, smiling this ridiculously innocent thing that makes Hannibal feel light headed, blood gorging his heart, every beat thumping, *Will, Will, Will*. “Supplying booze to a *minor*. I should call the cops.”

As Hannibal sits, he gazes fondly at the omega, saying, “Have mercy, Will. It isn’t like I killed somebody.”

Will sputters through a gulp of hot cocoa, both coughing and laughing, grinning as he says, “That the public is aware of, at least. For all I know, there are all sorts of skeletons—metaphorically and otherwise—in your closet.”

From almost any other person, Hannibal would consider a comment like this benign, but this is Will. While Hannibal doesn’t know him well enough to assume his intentions, he does catch killers for a living, and he has to do it exceptionally well if Jack Crawford is keeping an omega around.

It isn’t concern or worry Hannibal feels. He simply treads with all the caution his overblown ego will allow, which is to say, not much at all, “I like to think that if I were one of your murderers, I would know better than to hide all the evidence in a closet.”

That faux innocence Will had been wearing rapidly dissipates as he quirks a brow. He’s taking a sip of his cocoa, enjoying the steamy warmth on his face, letting the mug linger at his lips, which he watches Hannibal over.

“Of course not,” Will agrees, playful, but he’s staring Hannibal in the eyes with an appraising intensity that the good doctor would be remiss to ignore. “You’d keep it in your fridge.”

Hannibal doesn’t visibly react, yet despite the heat of the fire, he instantly grows cold and just about every muscle in his body stiffens. He has to remind himself that they have spoken about eating the rude... eating *Alana* of all people. Will could simply be going off their previous conversations, but Hannibal’s hackles are raised, alarm bells ringing, monster in him shifting, and he knows better than to ignore his instincts.

He sets his mug aside, freeing up both hands just in case they are needed. Though it does pain Hannibal to think of harming the omega, cutting his life short, however, at this point in time, it is ultimately preferable to prison.

“And my freezer,” Hannibal says, playing along, albeit in an uncomfortably truthful way.

Will smiles, pretty and sweet, yet it reminds Doctor Lecter of things that go bump in the night. “Wouldn’t want the meat to spoil.”

It's not that much later that Hannibal finds himself trailing along behind Will as the omega wanders around the office, checking out every nook and cranny. Will climbs up onto the mezzanine and shuffles through some books as Hannibal waits longingly below.

Some time goes by, and Will's hand brushes over a decorative statue of stag on the main floor, the animal a tarry black, fur almost feather like. Will glances at Hannibal, eyes keen with interest as his fingers delicately trace an antler. "It kinda looks like you," he excitedly remarks.

It doesn't. Not technically. But Hannibal isn't entirely sure Will sees things the way others normally do.

Will crouches at the fire, places another log on the dwindling flames. He twists glancing over his shoulder, meeting Hannibal's seamless gaze. "The Ripper knows who I am." He looks back to the fire, adds a few sticks of kindling for a brighter, hotter blaze. "He's been in my house."

Will stands, watching the fire for a few peaceful moments before approaching Hannibal. "There was a fly hook pierced through Olmstead's bottom lip. It was mine. I made it."

For the second time today, Hannibal finds himself masking concern. "Why hasn't Jack placed you in protective custody?" he questions, when really, he's eager to ask if Will liked what he saw, if it made him feel special to have become the Ripper's muse, to have *caught* his attention so thoroughly.

"He doesn't know."

Hannibal states the obvious, "Because you haven't told him."

Will shrugs, flopping into the seat at Hannibal's desk. "I didn't see a point to it."

"Your prolonged safety, perhaps."

Will rolls his eyes in a terribly childish manner as he scooches the chair, sliding into the desk, reaching to turn on the antique brass work light. "I don't think the Ripper is an immediate threat. He's clearly infatuated."

Though Hannibal is loath to admit it, this reminds him of an earlier conversation he had in the day, and while Will is unlike Franklyn in just about every way, they are noticeably similar in their casual disregard for their own safety. Granted, for drastically different reasons.

Then again, Will isn't entirely wrong. Depending on how the evening goes, he's perfectly safe. Nevertheless, nobody in their right mind would agree with the omega. "Will..." Hannibal says, sounding troubled as he hesitantly nears, gently placing a warm palm atop the flannel of Will's shoulder. "I can't help but worry."

Will lifts the little glass peacock paperweight in one hand, bringing it level with his eyes. "Is this a recent purchase?"

"Relatively."

Will huffs, the corners of his mouth curling upwards into an amused smile. He turns his head, looking up at Hannibal. “Impulse buy?”

“More or less.”

“Because I called you a peacock?”

While Hannibal would appear stoic and unreadable to most, he suspects Will can easily decipher all the appreciation, all the heaping bundles of admiration behind his composed and heavily guarded gaze because the omega smiles wider, chuckling, giving the alpha’s belly a poke.

“You’re cute,” Will pleasantly teases.

Hannibal doesn’t know quite what to say, so he says nothing at all, perfectly content to watch Will fiddle with the objects on the desk. He places the peacock back, and slides over a notebook. Hannibal should tell him it’s confidential, but he’s curious to see what happens when the omega opens it.

Which, of course, Will does because neither he nor his curiosity come equipped with respect for boundaries. It should be full of patient notes needing to be filed away in their proper folders, but instead it’s full of Will.

Will smiling. Will pensive. Will with damp, snowy curls hanging over his forehead.

Will leans closer to get a better look at the drawings, brow furrowing as he flips through the notebook. He becomes engrossed, conflicted mixed emotions fluttering across the profile of his handsome face.

Hannibal creeps his hand from Will’s shoulder to the back of his neck, hand heavy. It’s meant to appear and feel soothing, an anchor in the stormy waves of Will’s emotions, but in all honesty, if the omega becomes panicked or attempts to flee, he won’t be able to get away.

There’s a rough—by Hannibal’s high standards—drawing near the middle that makes Will take pause. It’s just his eyes, a whole page of them, but they are unmistakably Will’s and for some reason it has the muscles in Will’s neck becoming rigid.

He turns his focus to Hannibal, looking up at him. “You’re so fucking weird.”

“Indeed.”

Will frowns, nose wrinkled. It’s both precious and adorable. “You don’t want to eat them, do you?”

Hannibal blinks, both amused and a little dismayed. “Your eyes?”

Will nods, though his vision doesn’t stray from Hannibal’s gaze, if anything it becomes all the more focused, all the more pointed. “Yeah.”

“Heavens no.”

The relief on Will's face is immediate, and he laughs self-deprecatingly, the hue of his cheeks rising in color. "God, with my line of work, you just never know."

Hannibal leans into Will, like he's telling a secret, "Personally, I can't stand the texture." It's meant to sound like a joke, and it does, but it's also incredibly true. Hannibal thinks he ought to stop doing this, confessing to murder and cannibalism under the guise of humor, but then Will is laughing again so prettily, shoving at Hannibal's waist, grumbling that he's the worst, and Hannibal thinks he's going to land himself a few consecutive life sentences in prison because he already wants to do it again.

Will yanks at Hannibal by his tie, pulls it right from his vest and uses it to drag the alpha down by his neck like a disobedient dog on a leash, and though Hannibal could easily get away—Will is sitting on a chair with wheels, after all—he doesn't, and doesn't want to.

In just the mere few seconds it takes for Hannibal's knees to touch the hardwood floor, his insides match the fire in the hearth.

Will scoots a little closer, spread legs on either side of the alpha, and tucks Hannibal's tie back into place. Will smooths over the few wrinkles he finds, running one hand innocently over a strong bicep, flattening fabric. He then reaches for Hannibal's hair, fingers tenderly combing their way through.

With this delicate, glass like smile, Will fixes Hannibal's hair in such a way that a few strands fall across one side of his forehead. Following this, the back of a rough knuckle traces the jut of a sharp cheek bone, a calloused thumb drags gently over one sparse eyebrow, and then Will is holding the doctor's face, cupping it reverently as he leans even closer, looking Hannibal directly into his fathomless, whiskey amber eyes.

"What the fuck have I gotten myself into?" Will mutters, thumbs caressing Hannibal's jaw. "You're unlike any monster I've seen before."

Hannibal wants to purr. A part of him even wants to preen, though mostly he just wants to crawl into Will's lap and curl himself all around the omega, inside and out. He wants to cover him with the warmth of his own body, to slide through Will's veins, bury his nose in the omega's hair, and feel Will's slippery, wet heart beat in his hands.

It's not like Hannibal to act before thinking, yet he's pushing forward without thought, pressing his lips to Will's, grabbing onto the omega none too gently, and though he's forcing himself upon Will, Will doesn't resist or try to pull back. He does make a sound of surprise at Hannibal's sudden onslaught of affection, but then he's falling into Hannibal, arms snaking around his neck, tips of his fingers digging into the back of the doctor's shoulders.

Hannibal buries his hands in Will's soft, silky curls, pulls at them just to see what kind of noise the omega might make. Will groans this bitten off thing he tries to repress, to hold in—he breaks away, only briefly, to look at Hannibal. Will's face is flushed, their eyes meet, and if Will has any reservations, Hannibal can't find them, so he clenches Will's hair tight and drags the omega back to his lips, kissing him fiercely.

Chapter 10

It's been a week since Hannibal has seen Will. Nearly a week. The better part of week. More accurately, three days, but it's felt like *ages*.

It's genuinely quite troubling how much Hannibal wants Will's company. So desperately that it gives the serial killer pause. It does, honestly, have him thinking there might actually be something considerably wrong with him, that maybe he should be concerned about his mental wellbeing, but then Will texts him an unexpectedly gruesome image and he honestly can't blame himself for being head over heels for the dark angel.

Hannibal considers the legality behind the picture Will just sent him. The omega clearly took it himself, and while it lacks artistry, Hannibal can appreciate it for what it is—a *corpse*.

It sits limp and center stage at a grand opera house that Hannibal has frequented countless times over the years, a halo of brilliant light encircling the mutilated body in the dark. Its legs are slightly sprawled, one knee bent crookedly, arms dangling at its sides. The head is awkwardly, unnaturally pulled back, the neck of a cello crammed into the wide-open mouth and down its flayed throat, vocal cords the instrument's strings. There's no feasible way it would actually create music, but Hannibal doesn't outright reject the symbolism of it all.

'*A man-cello* 😊' Will texts, smiley face included, followed immediately by, '*How do psychos come up with this shit?*'

Hannibal ponders how to reply and ultimately settles on something only vaguely incriminating, '*Creative achievement in a variety of arts, ranging from creative writing to the culinary arts, has consistently been associated with higher narcissism and psychopathy.*'

When Hannibal gets bored because Will doesn't respond right away, he questions, '*Is this your Ripper, Will?*' It's not Hannibal's work. It's uninspiring, unimpressive, and not nearly ostentatious enough, but the alpha is painfully curious to know if the omega is aware of that.

It isn't until an hour later when Will decides to call instead of text. Hannibal is smack dab in the middle of a session with a patient when his phone vibrates inside a pocket. Hannibal should have his phone off, but he simply cannot tolerate the thought of ignoring Will entirely. Truth be told, he can't seem tolerate ignoring Will in any capacity, and it has him excusing himself, apologizing, mentioning a family emergency. It's a terribly, awfully, reprehensively *rude* thing to do, but it's *Will*, so he forgives himself for his own lapse in judgement.

When Hannibal answers, he doesn't say hello. Instead, he ever so fondly greets Will, "Darling omega."

Will huffs an exasperated little noise, though Hannibal can tell it's through a smile. "Shameless alpha."

A shiver rolls through Hannibal and it reverberates through his monster, claws itching to dig into pretty, perfect flesh and draw up bloody.

“It wasn’t the Ripper,” Will informs Hannibal.

“How can you be certain?”

“For all intents and purposes, the display is an abject failure. The Ripper inspires awe. His works are beautiful in their brutality. You’re blind as fuck if you think they aren’t hauntingly majestic. He captivates his audience with elegant horror and even instills fear into the brave. You should’ve seen Jack when he saw the wound man. He acts tough, but fear has a scent, you know?” Hannibal *does* know. “This new killer, he wanted to captivate an audience too, but his instrument didn’t even work. That’s *embarrassing*.”

Hannibal can’t help but ask, “Did you try playing, Will?”

“Jack wouldn’t let me.”

#

Hannibal wouldn’t go as far as to say he obsesses, but that is, in truth, exactly what he does. He goes to bed early and lies awake for hours under the covers of silky luxury sheets and a heavy down blanket, thinking of nothing but Will Graham.

That isn’t altogether an uncommon occurrence as of late, and usually with such pleasant thoughts, it’s a swift departure into slumber. However, this time, Hannibal can’t sleep, not with Will’s voice whispering in his head, repeating his words from earlier.

For the sake of curiosity, Will had wanted to play a grotesque, unholy instrument made of the dead.

Will finds the Ripper’s displays hauntingly majestic.

Will had honestly—or so it would seem—wanted to play a *grotesque, unholy* instrument made of the *dead*.

Will, clear as day, said the Ripper’s—*Hannibal’s*—brutality is beautiful, his horror *elegant*. He said Hannibal’s creations are *awe inspiring*.

These thoughts repeat over and over in the alpha’s mind. He can’t help but feel like he’s struck gold. However, there is also this awful niggling, a nagging feeling, a little disturbing ditty that’s quiet, yet still replays annoyingly high pitched, shrill and unignorable in the back of Hannibal’s mind, that someone might try to steal all that gold from him.

Or worse, it’s fool’s gold.

Hannibal so desperately wants Will to be genuine that he’s overlooking the blatant fact that he more than likely is *not*. How could he be? No one is *that* perfect.

Mischa was that perfect.

She’d stare into his eyes, her gaze soft, adoring, despite the malevolence that stared back at her. She’d sometimes cup his cheeks with her itty-bitty hands, keeping him close by so she

could keep on looking. Then one time, as she pulled away, she muttered in her precious little voice, “I can’t find it.”

“What can’t you find, Mischa?” Hannibal had asked.

“Your soul.”

It wasn’t until she was a few years older that it would be mentioned again. They were both lying on frigid wooden, rickety floorboards, their clothes threadbare and filthy, the musty, frosty room so cold Hannibal could hardly think. They were huddled together in what would be, unbeknownst to Hannibal, their last night together.

She had her hand on his cheek, her nails encrusted with grime, lines of her palm much the same. Hannibal didn’t care. He wasn’t any cleaner. Her other hand was tucked under his shirt, pressed against his skinny belly for what little warmth it held, her toes between his scrawny thighs. She’d cried earlier about how the cold hurt them. His hurt too.

She was looking directly at him, into his eyes, unblinking, when suddenly she spooked, claiming, “I think I saw something.”

“What did you see, Mischa?” Hannibal had wondered.

“A monster.”

At the time, Hannibal had assumed it was the cold or the lack of food getting to her, making her mind a bit funny. He had played along, questioning, “Am I a monster?”

“I think so,” she had whispered.

“I’m sorry.”

She shook her head, swishing her bedraggled strawberry blonde hair. “It’s okay. I don’t mind.”

It’s then he remembers the moment where she told him she couldn’t find his soul and his overabundance of curiosity had him asking, “Do you think monsters have souls, Mischa?”

She had affectionately patted his cheek with her numb fingers, smiling softly through her misery, “We can share mine, big brother.”

Hannibal rolls to his side, pressing the heels of his palms to his eyes. He feels a prickle of sadness behind them. His baby sister was the epitome of selfless... the tender embodiment of generosity. He didn’t deserve to have her so freely want to give him such an integral piece of herself.

Yet, there she was. So perfect and all his. And then they ate her.

Hannibal’s hands become tightly closed fists over his eyes.

She's the only person to have ever truly loved him, for she is the only person who has ever truly known him. Hannibal would like to say nothing about the future could cause him grief, but never being known again, and perhaps never being loved as he is, leaves a pit of despair inside him.

Excluding murder and cannibalizing the rude, Hannibal isn't prone to melodramatics, and he certainly doesn't allow himself to languish in it. It's for that reason he reaches for his bedside table, grabbing his phone, tugging the charger from it.

He brings the phone near his face, squinting in the darkness when it comes alight. Once his vision has adjusted, he enters his contacts and taps Will. It's 12:52 in the AM, an unacceptable and inappropriate time to call just about anybody, let alone an omega you want to court. However, the young man really does have a way of making the alpha impulsive.

Besides, Hannibal has watched Will through his windows enough times to know that the likelihood of the omega being in bed, getting a good night's rest, is slim to none. He's almost certainly sitting at his dining room table, surrounded by photographs of murder and the eerie flickering shadows of candlelight.

Will answers on the fourth ring, "Doctor Lecter."

"Mister Graham."

"It's late," Will muses.

"Quite."

"Should I be concerned?"

Hannibal sighs, turning to his back, arm above his head, brushing a few stray strands of ashy hair off his forehead. "Sleep evades me."

Will makes an amused noise of understanding. "You can't stop thinking about me."

Hannibal doesn't want to answer the obvious, to put a voice to the overwhelming desire that would have him calling the omega at such a ridiculous time. Instead, he pointlessly queries, "Did I wake you?"

"No," Will says. "I can't sleep either."

"Because of the man-cello?"

Will snorts out a laugh, and Hannibal imagines how profoundly gorgeous he must look in that moment, comfortable in sweats and a t-shirt, the orangey-yellow glow of the candlelight devilishly illuminating all his perfections.

"If Jack asks, yeah, 'cause it's an 'all hands on deck' sort of situation, but honestly, I'm kind of distracted." Will pauses, sighs. Hannibal suspects he combs his fingers through his hair, a visual mark of stress. "I have another murderer on my mind."

“The Chesapeake Ripper.”

“The one and only.”

Hannibal should make a better attempt at subtly, but he really can’t help himself, not when it comes to the omega. “Is he your favorite, Will?”

Will’s laughing again, which Hannibal suspects is directly at him. “My favorite killer? That’s a bit morbid, isn’t it? I don’t think I’m supposed to have those in this line of work.” In an obvious effort to deflect, Will turns the question around on Hannibal, “Do you have a favorite patient?”

“*Not* Franklyn.”

Will’s laughing even harder now, and *God*, what Hannibal wouldn’t give to crawl into the omega’s skin and feel that joyous sound from the inside.

“That poor guy,” Will teases, “What did he ever *really* do to you?”

“Besides inspire murderous intent?”

“*Doctor Lecter*,” Will mirthfully chides, “I am aghast.”

It’s Hannibal’s turn to laugh. He always does so sparingly and it usually needs to be forced if he even bothers with it at all, though with Will, it comes naturally.

“Innocent, are you?” Hannibal merrily retorts. “I seem to recall you saying something about a paperweight?”

Will playfully scoffs. “Don’t talk to me about innocence, Doctor *Guilty as Fuck*. True or false, that peacock paperweight you recently bought, you’ve fantasized about bludgeoning Franklyn with it. Maybe you’ve even imagined *I* was the one who was doing the bludgeoning.”

Since that is exactly the sort of thing Hannibal should not explicitly admit to, particularly over the phone to an omega who moonlights for the *FBI*, he says, “Have you ever had any inclination to join the field of psychiatry?” Will would undoubtedly be a natural.

Hannibal can practically hear the roll of Will’s eyes. “In what world would a college, let alone a medical school, accept an omega like me?”

“With a glowing recommendation from myself, any of your choosing.”

Will lets out a breath, a slight exhale of surprise. “Hannibal.”

“Sweetheart?”

Will groans. It’s one part pained, two parts delight. Hannibal can hear him slump forward, elbows on the table, face undoubtedly in the palm of at least one hand. “Do you have any idea what you do to the cave man in me?”

Hannibal's brows raise, tickled. "Cave man?"

"Yeah," Will amusedly huffs. "It's my lizard brain or something. You make it go haywire."

Hannibal's brows drop, furrowing. "Fight or flight?" That would make sense given Hannibal's certain proclivities and Will's uncanny ability to sense that kind of thing.

Will bursts out into laughter and once again Hannibal gets the distinct feeling he's being laughed at. "No, you fucking *dork*. When you say dumb shit like that, it makes me want to bend over for the big strong alpha."

"*Oh*," is all Hannibal can manage to say—not a single intelligible thought coming to mind.

"Yeah, *anyways*..." the last thing Hannibal wants to do is gloss over that enlightening tidbit of information, but he'll follow Will wherever he goes, even in conversation.

"Anyways..." Hannibal mirrors, painfully, awfully, *tragically* smitten.

"*Anyways*," Will says, a humored lilt to his voice. "I don't want to be a psychiatrist or anything like that. There's enough of those in the world. *Although*, I did read your latest paper."

"Did you?" Hannibal questions, pleasantly surprised.

"Yeah. What was it again? It was a mouthful."

"Evolutionary Ori—"

"That's it!" Will exclaims, interrupting the alpha. "Evolutionary Origins of Social Exclusion. It was very interesting."

"Was it?"

"It was. Even for a layman."

"A layman?" Hannibal says in disbelief. "Not the Will Graham I know."

Will huffs this subtle, self-conscious sound. He tries covering it with humor, "I'm actually fairly stupid."

Smiling to himself, Hannibal replies, "Pardon me for having my doubts."

"I'm talking to you, aren't I? An alpha *thrice* my age. What am I thinking? Clearly, I am *not*."

Hannibal finds himself laughing again, insides warm, heart tingling. "Cruel boy, you wound me. *Thrice* your age? Have mercy, darling." Will is laughing too—raspy, quiet, like he's trying to hold it back. Hannibal asks, "Is it not plausible that a wise and respectable alpha such as myself could have a positive influence on you?"

Chuckling, Will clears his throat, lowering his voice, and with a perfect Lithuanian accent, does a hilariously impeccable impression of Doctor Hannibal Lecter, “Pardon me for having my doubts.”

While damn near guffawing, Hannibal covers his eyes with a hand and despite the comfortably cool temperature of his bedroom, feels his face heat. It’s an all-around alarming reaction, one that also has a wide, happy smile across his mouth that is entirely devoid of his monstrous nature and is shockingly human. Had the alpha been able to see his reflection right now, he wouldn’t be able to recognize himself.

“*Will*,” Hannibal struggles to say, laughing, breath lost.

“Hannibal,” Will murmurs, tone light, mirthful, yet careful. “You should come over.” Hannibal’s heart lurches with excitement. “Do you have clients in the morning?”

“I do.”

Will processes that for barely a moment, then says, “Fuck ‘em. Tell them your mom died.”

“Will,” Hannibal sighs. The last thing the alpha wants to do is deny himself the opportunity to see the omega, but, “I have obligations.”

Will, evidently, which Hannibal should have predicted, is not an omega to take no for an answer. “Come on, Doctor Lecter. Live a little. When was the last time you played hooky from work?” Will lets out a humored breath as a thought occurs to him. “Let me guess. *Never?*”

“Obligations,” Hannibal repeats. “I have a reputat—”

“—No offence,” Will says, cutting Hannibal off, “I don’t give a shit about your reputation. I just want to see you. I want you to be here with me. Are you telling me that’s too much to ask?” And then Will quietly adds, barely above a whisper, “I miss you.”

#

The freeway has thin, patchy dustings of snow, headlights making chunky falling flakes glow and glisten as they flutter and flit their way to earth, wipers keeping them from gathering on the windshield. Hannibal knows he’s been manipulated. Will wasn’t subtle about it. Yet, here the alpha is, barreling down the 495 in his Bentley shortly after 2AM.

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Will's long, winding driveway is blanketed in shimmery, crystalline snow. Another inch or two and Hannibal wouldn't have been able to make it through with his car. Hannibal parks a few yards away from the house, emerging from his vehicle into a world that is silent in only the way snow can make it—a comfortable, peaceful, noiseless cold.

Smoke lazily billows from Will's chimney; his frosty windows aglow with pretty yellow light. His roof, along with the railings of his porch are quite snowy—canine paw prints, big and small, are scattered here and there near the front stoop.

Snowflakes flutter all around Hannibal, while in the distance, the whitened forest of trees, only speckles of green left, barely look real—a painting come to life. As the front door creaks open, Will looks just as ethereal. The omega, unspeakably handsome, leans against the door frame, arms crossed, smiling this gorgeously satisfied thing while his dogs wiggle and wag all around him.

Of course, Hannibal returns Will's smile. He doesn't even mean to. It just happens. Merely looking at Will, being able to admire him in the flesh, evokes such warm, delighted feelings in the alpha. Hannibal's heart races for reasons unknown, his breath hitches, and if Hannibal had to guess, he'd say this is what *happiness* feels like.

Will wears grey joggers, no socks, no shoes, just pale toes. He also wears a ratty old band t-shirt that, in truth, doesn't look awful, not when it's paired with Will's handsome scruff, or his pretty head of unruly curls. He's also biting his bottom lip, trying to halt his smile from turning into a grin. In all honesty, he doesn't do a very good job of it, but that grin is boyish and beautiful, and he looks so unapologetically pleased to have the alpha here that it stirs things in Hannibal, both wild and pure.

"You like dogs, right?" Will calls out, brow playfully quirked, and then, with a click of his tongue and a wave of his hand, they all barrel forward, leaping off the porch into the snow and toward Hannibal.

Hannibal *doesn't* like dogs, but for Will Graham, he'd worship them. It's the only reason he lets the animals trounce all over him in greeting. Little Buster and Ellie tippy-tap all over his Oxfords as they make a valid effort to leap at his thighs. Harley, happy as a clam, tail like a whip, bulldozes his way through the whole lot of them to reach Hannibal, shoving his face into the alpha's palm.

Jack sidles up next to Hannibal, the doctor digging his fingers into the thick white fur of his scruff, giving the dog a scratch. Max, unsurprisingly hangs back—the only one smart enough to be cautious of Hannibal, or maybe he's the only one with any manners.

A sharp whistle from Will has all but Max dispersing and that's when the border collie comes slinking near, tail swishing. He presses against Hannibal's shins, sitting atop the alpha's snowy shoes, eagerly gazing up at him.

Hannibal gingerly pats Max's head, scratching his ears. "And who might you be?" Hannibal queries, playing the part of curious first-time guest. He twists the collar into sight, looks at the tag. "Max," he says with a fond smile, "Aren't you a gentleman?"

Hannibal looks up from the dog, attention drawn to Will, finding the omega watching with a bemused little smile, who then adorably demands, "Get your ass over here,"

Hannibal nudges Max away as he takes a careful step forward—his shoes aren't meant for ice nor snow. Nevertheless, a part of Hannibal, perhaps the slightest lingering trace of the boy he barely ever was, wants to run to Will, to get him in his arms as quickly as possible, to dig his teeth into the omega's delicate neck, feel blood bloom across his lips and taste Will's very life pump directly into his mouth if only to reassure himself that Will is real, *alive*, and not some figment of his sadistic imagination.

However, he doesn't allow himself to rush, and instead focuses on staying calm and collected—*nonchalant*—as he steadily, heart a rabbit's pace, makes his way to Will, climbing the few slippery steps onto the porch, Max right behind him.

The moment Hannibal stands in front of Will, nearly a foot taller, the omega's hands are on him, on his face. Hannibal doesn't even notice that they smell of cheap department store dish soap, too overjoyed by the fact that they bury themselves in Hannibal's hair, harshly gripping the ashy strands. Will pulls the alpha close, their lips unceremoniously crashing together while a noise that Hannibal doesn't recognize—something between a growl and a whimper—escapes his own throat, his hands needily clutching at Will's sides.

There's absolutely no finesse between either one of them, it's all heat and desire. Will is kissing him with a ferocity, a *carnality*, Hannibal has never known—not like this—while at the same time, Hannibal's hands dip under Will's flimsy t-shirt, fingertips digging into perfect supple flesh, creating crescent moons with blunt nails.

Hannibal wants to sink his hands into Will, to feel the slip and slide of his warm, ruby red blood like a poor man wants to strike oil. Better yet, he wants to bury his face in Will, curl up with his lungs and heart, hide away from the world that isn't meant for monsters like him, and wear Will like a dream come true.

Unfortunately, reality comes crashing in by way of slobbering canines, Will's dogs beginning to gather. While Max quietly sits by Will's calves, the others aren't quite so considerate. They wind their way around Will's legs, Jack shoving his fluffy white body between the pair of them while Harley nudges Hannibal's thigh, whining for pats. It's Will, however, who's touch glides its way over Hannibal's chest, the omega's lips breaking away from the alpha's. Hannibal reluctantly opens his eyes, though finds himself instantly glad that he has because Will, under the golden halo of the porch bulb, looks positively angelic.

Hannibal ignores Buster's treat seeking beseeching gaze and his little bitty paws eagerly scratching at his shoes in search of attention and food, and instead lifts his hands, cradling

Will's face as if it were something precious, something long lost and priceless.

Will's fingers smooth over the lapels of Hannibal's blazer, a striking shepherd's plaid. The omega timidly smiles this wondrous, gorgeous thing that would undoubtedly make any alpha lose all sensibility, their brains thoroughly blended, liquefied into *soup*—any foresight, any bit of reasoning, any logical thought thrown right out the window into the gutter for Will and his rambunctious pack of mutts to trample all over.

Hannibal has a brief, flimsy thought that if he isn't careful, he could lose himself in his entirety in Will, but unsurprisingly, Will's bright, perceptive eyes prove themselves a distraction as they peer into Hannibal's own gaze—that thought, an important one, Hannibal's sure, hurtles headlong into the void.

Will teasingly warns, "If you keep looking at me like that, you're really gonna give me an exaggerated sense of self-worth."

With a poised and elegant hand, Hannibal brushes away a few wayward curls from off Will's forehead. Hannibal can't keep the reverence out of his voice as he tells the omega, "Darling boy, you're a god among men."

Will rolls his eyes as if Hannibal's words are just silly, insignificant ramblings of a madman. However, his alluring, bewitchingly handsome face does settle into soft, fond smile as he disentangles himself from Hannibal. He waves an arm, motioning indoors, and with a click of his tongue, all the dogs are rushing inside.

Then it's just the two of them again.

Will returns to his previous pose, leaning against the door frame, arms crossing as he playfully considers Hannibal. "If I'm a god," Will drawls, hypnotizing eyes jubilant and twinkling. "What does that make a monster like you? The devil?"

Hannibal likes to think himself in more grandiose, regal terms—a god among men, as well. A swift, cruel, *hungry* god. But... "Would that disappoint you, Will, if I am?"

Will shrugs and that boyish smile makes a second appearance. It illuminates Will's face with a mischievousness that Hannibal shouldn't find half as charming as he truly does. "What omega, god or otherwise, isn't a sucker for a bad boy?"

Hannibal's heart beats a little harder, a little faster as his fists clench excitedly at his sides, and though he doesn't outwardly smile, his joy is evident in the gleam of his whiskey eyes.

"I keep thinking about the night we met," Will says, making it sound an awful lot like a confession. "You looked particularly..." Will's eyes wander away as he pauses, searching for just the right word. His vision flits back to Hannibal, a rueful little smile dancing across his pretty mouth. "*Ravishing* when you were imagining Alana's demise."

Hannibal doesn't blush, but he feels the monster in him warm—a hot, heavy heat. The kind that evaporates flesh and sizzles through bone. "I had been envisioning you giving her chase through snowy woods."

Will looks past Hannibal, over the alpha's shoulder, to the dark line of the winter forest. "Were you with me?"

"I was avidly watching."

"Doctor Lecter," Will's unreadable, cerulean gaze meets Hannibal's. "Have you ever been hunting?"

Hannibal Lecter, an intelligent man indeed, ponders the correct response to give the omega he wants to spend the rest of eternity with. And, as he so often does with Will, abstractly confesses his crimes, "Not in the traditional sense."

Will rubs at his forearms, gooseflesh pebbling skin, though his eyes don't stray from the alpha's. "My dad used to take me all the time."

Hannibal, despite all his advanced education, genuinely can't tell if it's his own wishful thinking, or if Will is actually implying that the Minnesota Shrike would take him on hunts for pseudo Wills.

Hannibal politely smiles. "I would very much like to meet the alpha responsible for raising such a wonderful young man."

Will's face remains impassive. "He's dead."

Hannibal knows that of course. He also knows Will killed him. Truthfully, he just *really* wanted to see if Will would admit to it.

"My condolences," Hannibal says, which Will quite dramatically scoffs at. Hannibal quickly decides a change of subject is in order, and glances to Will's pebbled arms and paling toes. "You're cold. Time to head inside?" The omega agreeably nods. "I have a few things I need to grab from my trunk."

Will gives him a funny look. "Not a whole corpse, I hope."

Hannibal does a mighty fine impression of innocence. "Only bits and pieces."

Will huffs out a laugh, pushing off the door frame, and gives Hannibal's chest a light shove, but not before he drags Hannibal down by his tie, making their lips meet for a quick, lovely kiss.

"Go get your shit," Will says, Hannibal's feet feeling an awful lot like lead weights. He doesn't want to move. He doesn't want to let Will out of his sight, out of his hold, but Will gives him another little shove.

The alpha reluctantly turns, knowing the sooner he retrieves his things, the sooner he can put the spiced sausage in the fridge—for the protein scramble he wants to make his omega for breakfast—and cozy up with Will.

What Hannibal isn't expecting is a sharp *thwack* of Will's hand on his rear, nor the stinging sensation the smack leaves behind on his left buttock. Hannibal gazes over his shoulder at the

omega, stunned and wide eyed.

Will toothily grins. “Nice glutes.”

Hannibal blinks, taking a breath, and reminds himself that Will is only twenty. It only makes sense that his maturity, at times, will match his age.

As he continues down the steps, the alpha thinks of what lingers of that little boy inside himself, more of a youthful gentleman Hannibal likes to imagine, that wanted to run to Will. He blames exactly that minuscule part of himself for retorting, “They’re quite divine, aren’t they?”

Opening the trunk, removing the leather overnight bag and his cooler, Hannibal revels in the sound of Will’s laughter.

Chapter End Notes

I apologize for such a short chapter. I'm barely getting any time to write nowadays. If I included everything I wanted to in this chapter, it would probably take me another month or two. I figured everyone might prefer a short chapter now instead of a long one later (at least that's how I am).

Hope you enjoyed!

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

Apologies for taking forever to update and yet another short chapter. I'm doing my best!

As the warm glow from the living room fireplace seeps into the cozy kitchen, tea lights flicker in mason jars on windowsills and tinny radio music plays from an old Sony boombox on the counter. The dim light above the stove is also on, the fan alongside it gently whirring.

Doctor Hannibal Lecter isn't a presumptuous man, not when it comes to the one and only Will Graham. So, he opted not to leave his overnight bag at the end of Will's sad excuse for a bed and, instead, brought both his bag and the cooler into the kitchen in search of the omega.

It isn't altogether surprising to find a cereal bowl in the sink and a coffee ringed mug beside it. Droplets of water puddle near its stainless-steel rim, an empty milk carton sits to the right of it, while around the toaster, there are crumbs blending into the dated blond wood design of the laminate countertop. However, what Hannibal finds most interesting is the omega amongst the mess, sitting on the counter, comely legs and fetching bare toes dangling off the edge.

Will's joggers have ridden up some. The base of his shins and the long strong lines of his calf muscles peek out from beneath boring grey cotton that is urging towards threadbare. Yet, combined with the creamy smoothness of Will's skin and the dark masculine shadow of hair adorning it, Hannibal finds those pants anything but boring. There is actually something unexpectedly erotic about them. Or maybe that is inherently Will.

For once, Will doesn't stare with humorous knowing at Hannibal. The doctor gets a short-lived reprieve as he watches the omega rustle through the contents of an old mint can he plucked off a windowsill. Will palms whatever treasures he'd been looking for, setting the can aside. He twists his body to the window behind him, cranking the window open a crack, and then he turns back to Hannibal, mischievously meeting the doctor's captivated gaze.

Will doesn't smile, although the doctor can see one in the wicked gleam of Will's pretty Pacific Ocean blues. Will opens the clutch of his palm, and at first Hannibal thinks Will has a questionably rolled cigarette, but when the omega brings it to the pout of his lips, lighting the paper and whatever lies inside, Hannibal almost immediately recognizes the skunk cabbage like scent to be marijuana.

Smoke billows around Will, dissipating as it makes its way out the window and into the frigid dark. Will sets aside the lighter, his eyes not leaving Hannibal's.

“Well?” he says, quirking a brow. “You gonna stand there all night?” He spreads his knees in a particularly suggestive and inviting manner, glancing down at the empty gap between his thighs. He looks back to Hannibal.

The alpha drops his bag and the cooler on either side of him, stepping forward. He’s rewarded with a gorgeous smile and outstretched arms that drag him near the second he’s within reach.

Will hooks his calves to the back of Hannibal’s legs, one forearm resting on Hannibal’s shoulder while his hand curls around the back of the Hannibal’s neck, fingers dipping into the alpha’s hair. Will’s other hand, joint pinched between his index and middle finger, hovers by Hannibal’s mouth, waiting for permission.

“Yeah?” Will questions, brow raised.

Hannibal obviously thinks better of it. He certainly shouldn’t be encouraging Will’s use of illicit substances, not with a brain as precious as his. He wonders if Jack and Alana know about this behavior, and abruptly thinks *‘of course not.’* Alana would lose her mind.

It’s for that very reason, along with Hannibal’s inability—a handicap, honestly—to say no to the omega, that he curtly nods, warily assenting.

Will presses his fingers to Hannibal’s lips, the alpha deeply inhaling. He’s never smoked marijuana before. He’d always thought himself above this sort of thing. He’d been around marijuana plenty in his youth during his college years, but he’d always had a holier-than-thou attitude regarding it. He was too smart. Too motivated. The last thing he needed was to smoke something that had the reputation of taking smart people and turning them into lazy, apathetic, burdens on society.

Then again, Hannibal has read plenty of poetry where good alphas, great alphas even, meet a particularly enchanting omega and suddenly it doesn’t matter how smart or great they are. All is lost to the omega. Mind, body, and soul.

While the validity of Hannibal’s soul might be in question, the monster that roams freely inside him isn’t, and it comes roaring to the forefront as Will removes the joint from Hannibal’s lips, pressing the flat of his palm to the alpha’s mouth instead, covering its entirety. Will pinches the doctor’s nose closed, marijuana cigarette still perched between his index and middle finger.

Hannibal’s lungs burn, brain tingling with the first effects of THC as Will leans in close, their foreheads nearly touching. He’s so gorgeous, especially up close. Every line, every pore, every hair accentuates his beauty, and while Hannibal—pupils blown—is content to keep on looking, the monster wants to dig its pointed fangs into all that perfect flesh to see if he bleeds just as pretty.

Will’s eyes narrow in on Hannibal’s as if he’s trying to peek through a shrouded window, attempting to spot the alpha’s inner cogs whirring, or more aptly, the monster creeping. Hannibal wants to ask what exactly the omega sees, but his mouth is covered and even if it wasn’t, the alpha thinks better of asking. He should be concerned that Will sees too much of

him, yet the only reason he would hesitate to ask is because he'd be disappointed if Will didn't see enough.

"You excite me," Will murmurs, their noses brushing. Hannibal's breath would hitch if it weren't currently cut off, but as it were, Will removes his hand and replaces it with his lips. Hannibal's smokey breath escapes him, his body forcing it out before he can form a coherent thought beyond his mind's possessive rambling of, 'Will, Will, *Will*."

Will quite literally steals his breath, inhaling it deeply, *greedily*, pulling away with a strikingly roguish grin. He turns his head to the side, blowing what's left of the smoke from his lungs toward the window. As he returns his attention to Hannibal, he takes a long drag from the joint, eyes becoming fixed on the alpha.

Will grabs Hannibal by his jaw, dragging him near, locking his lips tightly—and dare Hannibal think *possessively*—against his. Will's palm flattens, sliding upwards against Hannibal's clean-shaven cheek, softly caressing.

Will exhales through his mouth, directly into Hannibal's. It's a strange sensation of his lungs inflating not on his own accord. Although, there is something quite pleasant about the notion of Will's breath becoming his own.

Will leans away, taking another pull from his joint. His hand, however, stays on Hannibal. A thumb brushes affectionately along the curve of Hannibal's jaw. Avid blue eyes watch as it traces his bottom lip when Hannibal releases Will's smokey breath.

The omega is leaning in again, lips sweet and gentle against the doctor's, kissing him slowly. Again, Hannibal receives Will's breath. This time he's ready for it. Expecting it. *Wanting* it. Hannibal has never shared something like this before. He finds himself, monster included, delighting in the intimacy of it, and delights even further when he reaches for Will and the omega melts into the touch, practically throwing himself against Hannibal.

Will wraps his arms around Hannibal's neck, squeezing their bodies close while Hannibal's hands slide beneath the back of Will's shirt, feeling the silky skin, hard muscle, and little knobs of his spine. The alpha can't help himself, he digs the crescent moons of his blunt nails into supple flesh. It isn't hard enough to break skin, but he knows it must hurt. He wants it to hurt. That's the whole point.

Will doesn't whimper or flinch. His legs tighten against Hannibal, his kiss crushing as his breaths between them stutter and lose rhythm. Will pulls away, sucking in a desperately needed breath and Hannibal has the strongest urge to drag him back by his hair.

Hannibal doesn't, of course. Not yet. Perhaps one day. For now, he settles for admiring the darkening flush of Will's cheeks as their eyes meet. Will's gaze quickly darts away as he takes a drag of his marijuana cigarette. He holds it for a few seconds, eyes flicking back upon exhale, dropping to Hannibal's lips which is where he presses the joint to.

Hannibal dutifully inhales, the corners of Will's mouth curving upwards when he does. When Will lifts his fingers away his smile continues to grow. Hannibal has absolutely zero complaints when the omega kisses him with that smile. Will, of course, steals Hannibal's

breath once more, but again, Hannibal has zero complaints, especially none about the way Will's kisses linger even when the smoke between them fades.

When Will leans back, sucking in a lungful of smoke from his joint, their eyes meeting. Will's pretty blues are glossy, lids slightly droopy, smile lazy yet spectacularly fond.

"Alpha," Will says, adorable in his charm as his index finger traces over the bridge of Hannibal's nose, smoothing over a thin eyebrow.

"Omega," Hannibal reverently replies, laying his palms flat on the top of Will's thighs, lightly squeezing.

There's something in Will's gaze that hardens, stiffens, solidifies, like screws being twisted into two boards of wood to hold them together. "You're something special," Will muses, eyes turning away, tiny smile pleasantly appreciative as he takes another pull from his joint. The monster in Hannibal preens, while the man himself finds his shoulders straightening, his hands holding a little tighter to Will. "From anyone else that would sound like a slur." The omega looks back to Hannibal. "You make it sound like you're addressing royalty."

Hannibal plucks the joint from between Will's fingers. There's barely a third left as he presses it to his own lips, a sparkle of amusement and thinly veiled deadly desire in his eyes as he says, "Aren't I?"

Will's expression turns incredibly smug as he snatches the joint back, taking another drag from it. "You think I'm hot shit, huh?"

Hannibal blames the marijuana and the loose fuzzy fluffy static inside his head on the chuckle that escapes him. "You're positively scalding, darling."

The raspy laugh that bursts from Will mesmerizes Hannibal. It's loud, but joyous. Will's eyes close and crinkle, handsome grin massive and entirely disarming in its authenticity.

Hannibal struggles to breathe. He isn't even sure why. His chest feels tight or maybe it feels huge. Something pounding, exploding inside him. Probably the sheer weight of his heavy heart, black as onyx as it may be, shattering under the immense strain Will has it under. Or maybe it simply wants to break free of his chest so it can kiss Will, too.

Because his heart can't, Hannibal does. He takes hold of Will's face and with no resistance from the omega, kisses him. It's with plush lips against his own and Will's happy sigh in both his mouth and ears that Hannibal realizes that he is well and truly lost in the feeling of such marvelous, comforting company. His heart has never felt so full, so warm, when weeks prior it was nothing but a cold, shriveled, empty husk of the thing it was supposed to be.

It's still ugly, misshapen, and completely wrong, but he thinks it would look glorious in Will's chest, if they traded one for the other. He wants to see Will wear his heart with pride, to feel Will's thick unsullied blood bring life back into his dead unfeeling heart.

Hannibal thinks of Will's breath in his lungs and wonders if the omega was breathing life directly into him. Hannibal has always felt more of an imitation of life than the actual thing.

He's always had to pretend. Feign emotions and proper, polite behavior—more robot than man. Yet, right now, he feels an unanticipated strong bout of emotion for Will that he hasn't the experience to understand or decipher.

Missing the sight of the omega, Hannibal parts their lips so he can look at him. Will has this way of settling into a smile. Carefree and like it takes no effort at all. Hannibal genuinely can't relate.

"Your eyes are pink," Will happily muses. "Are you stoned?"

"I don't know," Hannibal answers honestly. He doesn't feel quite right, but he doesn't feel wrong either. Everything is a bit more. A bit much. Fluid and thick.

"Here," Will says while holding up what's left of the joint, pressing it to Hannibal's lips. "Last toke."

Hannibal takes what he can of it, and when Hannibal is done, Will says, "Hold it for as long as you can," as he snuffs the ember out with a calloused thumb, placing the roach on the windowsill.

Hannibal does exactly what he's told, Will watching with eager, intelligent eyes. When Hannibal's own eyes begin to water and his lungs ache as if on fire, Will kisses him, sucking the breath right from his lungs.

Though their kisses linger, they inevitably part, and when they do, Hannibal ducks his head, pressing his face into the soft crook of Will's neck, dappling sweet kisses and inhaling every ounce, every fiber, every shred of the omega's luxurious essence.

It's for the best that Will pulls him free because he'd have never willingly left. Will holds the alpha's face in his palms, eyes as observant as ever as he affectionately combs back ashy brown hair that had fallen over the alpha's forehead.

Will tenderly remarks, "You have a face like no other."

Hannibal's heart throbs. His monster roars.

Will's tingling touch slides over a high cheekbone. "Why is the sophisticated, phlegmatic Doctor Hannibal Lecter so enthusiastically at my mercy?"

That is an incredibly easy answer. "You must understand, Will, that I'm feeling unbearably rabid."

Will's face gives nothing away, blank beyond eyes that would bore their way directly into the inner workings of Hannibal's soul if there ever was one. Maybe there is. Maybe it's the monster.

"That should scare me."

Hannibal nods in the in precious cradle of Will's hands. "It should."

Will's attention strays from Hannibal, looking over the alpha's shoulder. "What's in the cooler?" It doesn't sound like an accusation, but it has the distinct feel of one.

"Breakfast," Hannibal readily admits.

Will's attention flicks back to the alpha, brow raised with excitement. His forearms rest on Hannibal's shoulders, hands clasped behind his neck. "What're you making me?"

Hannibal swallows, heart all aflutter as he thinks back on one of their very first conversations. "Protein scramble."

Will's eyes widen as he huffs out a laugh. It sounds nervous. Will glances back to the cooler. "What's the source of protein?"

"You're not a vegetarian, are you?"

Will gives Hannibal's shoulders a slight shake. "Don't be stupid." Hannibal is desperately trying not to be. "I told you I was raised by a hunter."

"You take after him then." A hopeful statement. Not a question.

Will's glossy, red-rimmed eyes narrow. "*Baby*," Will sweetly drawls, the tips of his fingers burrowing into the back of Hannibal's hair, making the alpha shudder and the monster in him purr. "Do you know who my dad was?"

Hannibal figures now would be the optimal time for fibbing, but his entire life is lies upon lies. He doesn't want a tangled web of them between him and Will. "The Minnesota Shrike."

Will sighs in acceptance, not particularly happy with Hannibal's knowledge. "Did Alana tell you?"

"I recognized your name when you introduced yourself."

Will tugs at the alpha's hair, huffs, "So, you've always known and you didn't think to mention it?"

Hannibal innocently shrugs. "It didn't seem pertinent."

Will rolls his pretty blues. "Does it now?"

"Depends," Hannibal playfully replies. "Do you derive pleasure from killing and eating your doppelgängers?"

Will makes a snort of disgust. "*No*."

The corners of Hannibal's lips curl their way into a smirk. Hannibal's hands sliding from Will's thighs to his hips. "What if they were rude?"

Will's gaze instantly shifts to the cooler behind Hannibal. "Hannibal," Will says, tone admonishing.

Their eyes catch. “William.”

Will's cheeks might brighten something ferociously gorgeous, yet that doesn't stop him from fretting, “Tell me you don't intend to feed me some poor fucker you put through a meat grinder because he flipped you off on the freeway.”

“Don't be ridiculous,” Hannibal replies with a squeeze of Will's hips, and with a startling calm and no word of a lie, adds, “He called me a quack.”

It takes a moment for Will to process, a myriad of expressions crossing his handsome face, but once he has, it results in him bowing forward with laughter. He shakes with it, face partially pressed into Hannibal's shoulder and chest.

“Oh my fucking god, Hannibal!” he guffaws, lifting his head, eyes teary with delight. “I didn't know you were a comedian.”

The good doctor forces himself to smile. It feels strained and fake and wholly out of place on his face. He also forces himself to say, albeit somewhat ominously, “I have all sorts of hidden talents.”

Chapter 13

They share another joint between them after Will puts a frozen freezer burned pizza into the oven to cook. Hannibal has no intention of eating any, but by the time Will cuts the pizza into lopsided triangles, the alpha's thoughts are so muddled, thinking is like trudging through a muddy bog that has stolen his boots. Plus, the omega serves him a couple slices at the dining table that's decorated in Ripper kills.

"You aren't squeamish, are you?" Will asks as he shoves aside a handful of grisly, nightmarish pictures to make room for their plates.

"Hardly," Hannibal answers, throat bobbing when he sips a bottle of Budweiser that Will had unearthed from somewhere deep within the refrigerator. It tastes like hell and assaults the good doctor's senses, though it does have the desired effect of stopping his tongue from sticking to the roof of his mouth. "I used to be a surgeon."

"No shit?" Will says, surprised, or at least feigning such, as he pushes together two mismatching wooden chairs. With a handsome hand relaxed overtop the back of one, Will looks to the alpha, their eyes catching. "Were you any good?"

"The best," Hannibal shamelessly, and in his opinion, quite honestly replies.

"How many lives did you save?"

"Countless many."

Will smiles in that innocent way of his. The one that isn't innocent at all and makes Hannibal think the devil may lurk. "So, you're something of a hero then."

"I was simply doing my job."

With shrewd eyes and a quirked brow, Will pulls out the chair for Hannibal to sit. "Humility doesn't suit you, Doctor Lecter."

Hannibal's effortlessly stoic face cracks. Only barely, but his minuscule smile could only belong to a man that's entirely too smitten. "Pardon me, Will," he says, playing along as he takes his seat. Will sliding into his own. Their thighs brushing. "My apologies. You're undoubtedly correct," Will nods with an expression that reads, 'obviously.' "I was certainly a hero."

Will's smile turns into a silly grin. "Of epic proportions, I imagine."

Hannibal graciously bows his head. "I deserve a medal."

Will's pretty, darling blues—waterlines tinged pink—excitedly widen. "I was thinking bigger. A statue of you. Smack dab in the middle of Baltimore where everyone can gather to worship our hero. Our *savior*."

Hannibal chuckles, or maybe it's the monster because Will is tickling his ego and the omega's idea gives him a thrill. "That seems excessive."

Will looks at the alpha from over a slice of pizza, taking a large bite, and with a full mouth and a wide grin, says, "You love it." Will isn't wrong. "I'm surprised you haven't gotten into politics."

Hannibal takes a gulp of beer to wet his pasty mouth. "Too much public scrutiny."

"Really? What's the worst that could happen?" Will's smile turns sly, foxlike, as he takes another bite of his overcooked pizza. "Would it be so bad if the world got to know the *real* Hannibal Lecter?"

Something in Hannibal jerks. There was inflection there. Insinuation. Hannibal's sure of it. That thing in Hannibal twists and writhes while Will is smiling, but the smile is sickly sweet, those fucking eyes like drill bits boring gaping holes into Hannibal's soulless amber orbs where God only knows what could fall out and incriminate him.

Hannibal thinks he's too stoned for this because he's feeling distinctly *paranoid*. His mind is telling him he's been too complacent, too goddamn enamored when he should have been deeply concerned all along.

What does Will know?

How much does he suspect? Because he must. He *must*.

As Will glances away to the table riddled with Hannibal's depravity, he munches on pizza. Hannibal mirrors him, setting aside the beer bottle and trading it for a crispy slice. He takes a bite. Chews. Barely tastes it, yet tastes it all too much as he stares sightlessly at his many murders.

"Imagine being this psycho," Will says, motioning to the pictures with his pizza. "Must suck."

Hannibal feels vaguely insulted. "He seems to be doing quite well for himself." They look at each other. Will with a quirked brow. "...All things considered."

"He's pathetically lonely." That thing in Hannibal twists again. This time into knots. "He's a fucking ghost. Wherever he goes, nobody sees him. Not in any way that matters. I bet people fawn all over him, but what good is being admired when the only thing people admire about you is the wall of bullshit you've built around yourself?"

Hannibal sips at the beer, wants to chug it. "Everybody builds walls."

"Well, this guy," Will says, pointing at the pictures, "has built himself a goddamn fortress, and he's all alone inside it." The omega looks back to the images, sifting through them until he finds the one he's searching for. He pushes it in front of Hannibal and steals the beer from Hannibal's hand. He takes a large swig before hesitantly admitting, "I don't think he always was."

Hannibal's eyes lower and his gut immediately clenches. It's beautiful. *Gorgeous*, in Hannibal's wicked, contemptible opinion. It's a fairy, or fae, depending on how you look at it. One in the same, really.

Hannibal had strung her up in a towering, sprawling weeping willow, though not before he'd removed her rounded ears and replaced them with pointed, prickly ones he'd fashioned out of blackberry vines. He'd surgically implanted more vines around her spine and shoulder blades and shaped them outside her body into sizable wings, larger than the woman herself.

It took over a dozen painstaking hours to create the majesty of her wings, decorated in a multitude of fungi and bright spellbinding blossoms of countless variety. Interspersed were ripe, juicy blackberries still on their vines, along with wild strawberries and blueberries.

The young woman had been beautiful before her untimely demise with her hazel eyes and her long flowy white blonde hair, but Hannibal had transformed her into something ethereal. Her skin sickly pale, tinged blue, plump lips purple with death. Hannibal had plaited the front strands of her hair into fishtail braids, attaching them behind her head using pretty clips decorated with opal and silver leaves. In the braids themselves he'd weaved the dazzling yellow blossoms of the rue flower—Misha's favorite.

"It's a tribute," Will says, and he couldn't be more right. It was for Misha on one of the many anniversaries of her death. "...to better times and make believe. It's a child's fantasy. A fairy tale. I think whoever he made it for, knew him. The *real* him."

Hannibal would spend innumerable hours tromping after Mischa through the forest of their estate as she foraged for bilberries and lingonberries. She'd also carry a small sachet of native wildflower seeds around her waist, planting little fairy circles.

"Big brother," She'd once said, thin lips pursed in concentration as she painted the red mushroom top of her handmade clay garden ornament, "Maybe you're part fae."

"Oh?"

"Dark fae are malevolent," she looks up from where she sits in the garden to where Hannibal stands—like a guardsman—at her side. "They are malicious and violent. They don't like to help people. They'd rather wreak havoc upon the human world."

"Is that how you see me?"

She shrugs, going back to her decorating. "It's just how you are. There's no shame in it."

"I frighten mother, and father can't stand the sight of me."

Again, she looks up at Hannibal. This time, however, she reaches for him, pressing her little palm to his larger one, holding his hand. "Does that upset you?"

He shrugs like it doesn't, though at times he feels bereft.

Her eyebrows scrunch and her mouth twists into a frown. "They love you, Hanni."

Hannibal squeezes her hand. “Not in the way I love you.”

Mischa smiles sadly. “Nobody can love in the way a dark fae does.”

“No one?”

“*Well,*” Mischa drawls, tightening her grip on Hannibal’s hand. “Nobody except another dark fae.”

As Hannibal watches Will trace the outline of a wing with an index finger, he can’t help but wonder if he’s found himself a kindred spirit... or an award winning actor.

“Whoever this was for... a child if I had to guess, probably long gone,” Will explains, “the Ripper loves them very much.”

“You believe psychopaths can love?” Hannibal queries, and for wanting to appear ‘normal,’ takes another bite of his slice of pizza.

Will looks to him. “I think some can. In their own fucked up way.”

“Did your father love you?”

Will huffs, pushing away the picture, glancing absently at the rest. “He was a good dad,” Will says. “Step-dad,” he clarifies with a wave of his hand a roll of his eyes. They land on Hannibal. “*Semantics.* He was the only dad I ever knew or had.”

“And yet,” Hannibal drawls, “you shot him. *Excessively.*”

Where the alpha was expecting outrage, the omega just laughs, albeit somewhat bitterly. Will takes a swig of that awful beer before he mutters, “He wasn’t without his faults.” Will’s gaze hardens, solidifies on Hannibal. “Sometimes you remind me of him.” *Because we’re both serial killing cannibals?* Hannibal wants to ask. “He was obsessed with me.” Oh. “He loved me so much he wanted to *eat* me.” *Oh.*

“How terribly unfortunate,” Hannibal robotically replies, taking yet another bite of tasteless pizza.

Will laughs, a real one. A charming one. He knocks his knee against Hannibal’s. “I’ll say.” Will gives Hannibal’s arm a light shove and takes another swig of beer, handing it over to the alpha. Hannibal drinks as Will chats, “It’s what they say, isn’t it? A dog-eat-dog world.”

Hannibal gives a curt nod. “Eat or be eaten.”

A somberness takes hold of Will. He grows quiet. Restless. The omega is looking over the Ripper’s murders when Hannibal chooses to say, “For what it’s worth, I hope we can feast together and not on each other.”

That grabs Will’s attention, his soft eyes returning to the alpha. He looks like he’s feeling every emotion there is as he scooches closer to Hannibal, reaching for him. It’s moments like

this, with Will's warm rough palm on his face, guiding him closer, their lips meeting, that Hannibal can't fathom that this is all pretend, that this isn't *real* for Will.

He'd be a fool, however, not to consider it a likely possibility. Yet, with Will's lips on his, all his mind does is run headlong into the future—the one he hasn't been able to stop fantasizing about since they met. The one with a twinkling chandelier, a grand dining table, Will sitting at the opposite end from Hannibal while a handful of their children sit around it. Hannibal's latest kill would be cooked to perfection and elegantly displayed, ready for their *feasting*.

Without thinking, Hannibal murmurs into the kiss, "Do you want children, Will?"

Will jerks away, his eyes wide and practically scandalized. "Excuse me?"

"I—" Hannibal shouldn't have asked that. He doesn't know why he asked that. "I'm getting ahead of myself."

"*I'll say*," Will repeats his words from earlier. This time much more tersely.

"Forgive me," Hannibal politely requests, borderline beseeches. He bends the truth a bit, "I was thinking of a future where we're together for the holidays and my imagination ran wild with it. I pictured Thanksgiving. Christmas. A large turkey dinner and an equally large family to enjoy it."

Will seems to soften. "Do you have much in the way of family?"

"None."

Will frowns, pressing his leg against Hannibal's. "Same."

Hannibal shouldn't admit this, but he does because he's stoned and smitten and so desperately wants to trust Will despite all his better judgement. "I had a little sister once upon a time."

Will faintly smiles. It's gentle and tinged with sorrow. "Did you?"

"She was magnificent."

Will's eyes brighten. "Was she like you?"

"Not at all. She was like *you*."

Will's eyebrows fly upwards, surprised. "Me?"

Hannibal nods. "Incredibly soulful."

"Hannibal..."

"She had a profound sense of emotion. Wise beyond her years. An angel personified."

Will shakes his head in denial. "I'm no ang—"

“—you are.”

He’s shaking his head again which has Hannibal capturing Will’s face in his palms, halting his movement. “I’m not,” the omega stubbornly mutters.

Hannibal kisses him just for the sake of it. Soft and gentle. Barely there, yet there all the same. It makes Will’s steely blues flutter closed, the omega turning to putty in the alpha’s hands, leaning into the good doctor’s touch.

“Compared to me, you are,” Hannibal tells him between kisses

Will huffs, lips tilting prettily with amusement against the alpha’s mouth. His eyes open, looking at Hannibal. Always looking. “Because you’re such a monster, right?”

“I swear it,” Hannibal readily admits, unthinking and without second thought.

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A little while later, after a dozen or so kisses, Will pulls away, returning to his pizza and eating it with gusto. Hannibal tries to feign some semblance of Will’s enthusiasm as he politely chews on his own.

Hannibal quietly observes as Will’s exuberance only grows as he sifts through the pictures on the table. The omega’s attention doesn’t linger on any particular one, he’s just going through a visual meandering, a lazy perusal. “I can’t figure out how he chooses his victims. They all seem random. No connections and nothing in common besides the occasional coincidence.”

“You don’t believe they could simply be random?”

Will shakes his head. “No way. Think of his displays like poetry. Every word means something. The victims *mean* something.”

The omega holds up a picture for the alpha to get a better look at it. It’s a close up of a dead man’s face. Shaggy brunet hair highlighted with grays and whites, showing his middle age. Hannibal had plucked his sepia black eyes from his skull and replaced them with nuggets of gold.

Will looks from the picture to Hannibal. “If you were the Ripper, why would you have killed him?”

Hannibal’s eyes narrow, his heart thumps, churns his blood to butter. “If I were the Ripper?”

Will enthusiastically nods. “Let me guess. He dinged your bumper when he was trying to parallel park and took off without giving you his details?”

Hannibal remains silent. Monster wailing an ugly screech within.

“No? Let me think.” Will’s eyes wander with concentration, teeth nipping his bottom lip. “Oh!” He exclaims, sights returning to the alpha. “While in line at the supermarket, he budged in front of you?”

Hannibal shouldn't. He knows he shouldn't. But he does. "I asked him to hold the elevator as I approached. He let the doors close."

"He didn't?!" Will says with a laugh, playfully scandalized.

Hannibal curtly nods. "He did. Almost directly in my face."

"The bastard!"

Hannibal can't help the smile that takes hold of him, human eating teeth on full display while fathomless, reptilian eyes shine a little brighter, a little less empty.

"And this one?" Will asks, pointing to yet another picture. It's of a young woman this time, barely out of her teens. She's hard to decipher. The shot is taken from the entrance of the cathedral. She hangs suspended from the towering stained-glass ceiling, over the pulpit, the morning sun illuminating her in a myriad of dazzling colors.

"She stumbled out of a cab one night with a bunch of her girlfriends. They'd had too much to drink. Her friend's vomit splashed my shoes and the shins of my pants. She laughed. She thought it was funny."

Will cocks his head, curious as can be. "Why not kill the girl that puked on you?"

Hannibal blinks. Thinks it's obvious. "She apologized."

The corners of Will's eyes crinkle, a terribly sentimental smile parting his lips. Will bumps their shoulders together, though the brief touch isn't enough for the omega. He throws an arm around the alpha's shoulder, manhandling him close, pressing a series of kisses along his jawline—a trail of affection leading to Hannibal's ear where Will sinfully bites, whispering, "You'd make the cutest Ripper."

Chapter 14

Will's laughter rings out through the frosty, snow drenched air. Flakes swirl all around them, though Will runs ahead, calling out, "Hurry up, old man!"

Hannibal doesn't really know how this happens. Then again, he doesn't know how a creature like Will Graham happened. Whether it was pure happenstance or divine intervention, Hannibal will never know. What he does know is one moment Will was whispering sweet nothings into his ear and the next he was scampering down into the cellar only to pour shots of a questionable clear liquid he retrieved.

"Moonshine," Will had told him. "My grandmother made it. She was one hell of a woman."

After throwing back one of his own, Will had pushed a shot toward Hannibal, expectant, eyebrows raised, as if daring him.

Hannibal had held up the glass to eye level, studying it. The alpha had his reservations, of course, but stoned and damn near in love, he drunk it down in one solid swallow. He grimaced as it burned a trail through him, but Will's grin and the happy kisses that followed made it worth it.

With Will's mouth a hairsbreadth from his own, his perfect hands lost in Hannibal's hair, the omega had murmured, "Wanna see where my Grandma hanged herself?"

Naturally, Hannibal had said yes. With the way Will beamed at him, he didn't even care when Will slid another shot his way. He didn't even think as he gulped it down.

By the front door, Will all bundled up, the omega had eyed the alpha like some funny out of place thing. "You can't go outside like that."

Will rummaged through the closet, shaking out a few dusty garments, too big to be the omega's. They were a white and grey camouflage pattern, meant for going unseen in winter woods.

"They were my dad's," Will had told him.

Hannibal didn't know how he felt about donning the Minnesota Shrike's hunting gear, what with all their parallels. Will, however, seemed entirely unbothered by it. If anything, he'd seemed excited.

Will had pushed Hannibal's plaid blazer from off the alpha's shoulders, tossing it to the bed in heap with a pile of dogs. Hannibal was too far gone—in a varying multitude of ways—to care.

Through laughter that Hannibal barely recognized as some of his own, and a little struggle, Will lifted the alpha's zip neck sweater up and off, and tugged at his silk maroon tie.

“I like you better like this,” Will had said after flinging away Hannibal’s tie, little Buster dragging it off to his round fluffy bed by the fireplace that lazily crackles.

“Stoned and borderline drunk?”

Will smiles, terribly fond, perhaps just a smidgen smitten too, or maybe that’s just Hannibal’s imagination playing tricks on him. The alpha doesn’t have the wherewithal to figure it out for certain. Not right now. Maybe not ever. Maybe he’s just looking at his own reflection in Will’s eyes and he’s too inebriated by illicit substances and desperate longing to be able to tell the difference.

Will had threaded his fingers through Hannibal’s hair, smoothing the untidy strands. “Peeled of your layers.”

Will poetically wrapped him in new ones made of camo, and on a bended knee, Will had tied the lace to one of the clunky winter boots on Hannibal’s feet.

“These were your father’s as well?”

With handsome features marred with concern, Will had frowned up at the alpha. “Is it too weird?”

“No,” Hannibal had answered. “Do you suppose he killed anyone while wearing these boots?”

“Oh,” Will had said, brow scrunched contemplatively, briefly looking away. He nodded—one single curt jut of his chin. “Probably.”

Will tied the other lace and stood, smiling at Hannibal. “How do they fit?”

Hannibal had smiled back, shifting his weight from foot to foot and rolling to the balls of them and back. “Perfectly.”

Will pulled a wool beanie over Hannibal’s head, playfully tugging it over his eyes, blinding him. It smelled so distractingly like the omega that it made the alpha dizzy with it. Will flipped the material back, all smiles, sending the alpha into a spiral somewhere else.

“You’re so fucking handsome,” Will had said as he wrapped a scarf around Hannibal’s neck, that under normal circumstances the good doctor would balk at, pilled and furry as it was.

Hannibal didn’t have words for the heat that swelled inside him. Not in this state. So, Hannibal simply shoved Will against the door and kissed him something fierce.

Outside Hannibal, shocking though it might be, *gracelessly* gives Will chase, and, in the end, is tackled for his meager efforts. Although, he’d done little to avoid it.

They wrestle under the apple tree. In the dead of night and the dead of winter, it looks as if were just a gnarled skeleton of one. Snow lines it’s twisted branches, though on the thickest and highest one, Hannibal can see that Will has been busy.

“A swing,” the alpha breathlessly muses from underneath the item, Will at his side. Shoulder to shoulder. It’s just two ropes attached to either side of a sawed-off chunk of a two by four. It’s by no means aesthetically pleasing. It is, however, the sort of thing children would appreciate.

Will lifts an arm and pushes the swing. It glides above them. Back and forth. Back and forth. Hannibal wonders if Will imagines it being his grandmother instead.

“Is this where she died?” Hannibal inquires, already knowing the answer.

Will nods, nose and cheeks pink. There’s just enough light from their flashlights lost in the snow, creating two bright orbs around them. “She thought she created a monster.”

Hannibal looks to Will. “Didn’t she?”

Will stares up at the tree, shrugging. The coarse material of his coat crunching against snow. “I guess it all depends on one’s perspective.”

“What’s yours?” Hannibal has to ask.

“It was through no fault of her own.”

“Do you believe he was born a monster?”

Will turns his head, meeting Hannibal’s gaze. “Weren’t you?”

“In many ways yes. In many ways no.”

Will huffs, breath prettily fogging the air. “Cryptic.”

“Did your father only kill your doppelgangers?”

The omega’s face pinches. “There’s no evidence, but I think he killed my mom. He said she ran off, but,” Will shrugs again, looking away, looking hurt. “She wouldn’t have done that.”

“She loved you.”

Will nods, smiling wistfully. “I could look into her eyes and just know it. No second guessing. It felt warm and safe. Like home. Something only a mother could give.”

The monster slithers within Hannibal, hissing with envy. It wants to be Will’s home.

“And your father? What kind of love did you find in his eyes?”

Will is staring up at the tree again. “Hellfire.”

Hannibal couldn’t be more pleased that Will had swiftly, albeit messily, extinguished those flames.

“I’d have liked to have been there,” Hannibal says, not really thinking. Not really able to. He shouldn’t say these sorts of things.

Oh well.

Will, eyebrows scrunched together, looks to him for clarification. “What?”

“To witness his destruction.”

Will’s pretty blues widen, though in the dark they’re akin to the deepest murky depths of the ocean. “You wish you saw me kill him?”

The cold should have helped sober Hannibal. Maybe it did, and perhaps he was simply lost in the moment, lost in his desperation for Will and his own critical, burning desire for connection, but there’s simply no excuse for the way the alpha nods, despicably eager.

The admission should frighten Will, he should see the way darkness swirls in Hannibal’s gaze and how the monster’s fangs poke through the void of them, yet Will just chuckles, knocking his knee against the alpha’s thigh, and affectionately huffs, “You’re a goof.”

“You think I’m jesting?”

Hannibal’s head is leaned to the side, cushioned by wool and snow. He can’t help the way he stares at Will or how taken he is by the young man’s beauty. He wants to tell the omega how obscenely gorgeous he thinks Will would look decorated in his father’s blood splatter. He wants to see Will lick the crimson speckles from his lips.

Will smiles, pretty and soft—delicate like the snowflakes that flutter all around them. “I think you’re drunk.”

Will is giving him an out, Hannibal realizes. An excuse. Hannibal should take it, but Hannibal should do a lot of things. He should be sleeping right now, at home, *alone*, in his own bed... but he is not. He’s *here*.

Hannibal wouldn’t want to be anywhere else.

“Where every other omega before you failed. You triumphed. Why shouldn’t I like to see that?”

Will frowns up at the tree, pushing the swing again. It sways overhead. Back and forth. Back and forth. Back and forth.

Hannibal reaches for Will, and though they are both wearing bulky gloves, the alpha holds the omega’s hand between them. “Have I said too much?”

Will blinks, shakes his head. He turns to look at Hannibal. “Everybody treats me like I’m broken.”

“Because you killed your father?”

Will nods, eyes glazed with emotion. Mournful, maybe, though Hannibal can’t find any guilt within them. “Alana thinks I’m out of my mind. She doesn’t understand how an omega could

do that.” Will rolls to his side, tucked up against the alpha, resting his head on a fluffy shoulder while he splays one gloved hand over a strong chest. “Do you understand?”

Hannibal wraps a possessive arm around Will’s back, grips the back of the omega’s neck. “You’re trapped in a world that wants you simpering and submissive. It doesn’t know how to handle a formidable omega. It’s never seen that kind of ferocity.”

Will wiggles even closer, nuzzling his chilly nose beneath Hannibal’s jaw, hiding his face away in the crook of the alpha’s neck. “I wish you’d been there,” he murmurs, the warmth of his breath causing Hannibal’s skin to pebble. “Maybe in another universe...”

Hannibal slides off a glove and slips his hand under Will’s hat, dragging the blunt end of his nails over the omega’s scalp. “I’d have been so proud of you.”

In a rare moment of vulnerability, the omega pleasantly shivers, clinging to Hannibal, holding tight like one might if on a life raft adrift at sea.

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Will rolls to his knees, accumulated snow falling from him as he climbs to his feet. He drags Hannibal with him.

“Push me?” Will asks as he sits himself on the swing, gloved fingers folding their way around either side of the ropes.

Hannibal dutifully does.

Beyond the strain on the ropes, Will swings silently—mesmerizingly. Back and forth, back and forth Will goes.

As the omega slowly begins to gain speed, the wind steals his beanie, snow getting lost in his wind-whipped curls. His legs pump as he throws Hannibal a smile.

“I wish I could fly,” Will says.

Hannibal only wishes he himself had the power to make it so.

Will swings Hannibal’s way, the alpha giving him a push.

Back and forth and back.

Push.

Push.

Push.

“Do you think I could if I try hard enough?” Will asks, eyes bright, smile a thousand blazing watts of sunshine. Hannibal wonders how the snow isn’t melting all around them. “Watch me jump!”

As if Hannibal's eyes could stray elsewhere. They're locked onto Will as the swing climbs higher, though realistically, not that high at all. On cue, Will lets go of the swing, using its momentum to propel him forward. It's a pitiful few feet to the snowy ground, on which, Will flops, landing on his belly with a pained grunt.

Hannibal comes to his aid, hovering over the omega as Will groans, rolling to his back. Hannibal leans down to help swipe the snow from his face. Will's laughing, red-faced and entirely too beautiful.

Hannibal holds out a hand to him. Will clasps it.

"You're more of an ostrich than an eagle, my dear," Hannibal teases as he pulls Will to his feet.

Will rolls his eyes as he's prone to do. "Says the *flightless* peacock."

Hannibal wouldn't recognize the smile that adorns his own lips. "They are majestic gliders."

Will laughs, shoving Hannibal toward the swing. "Prove it."

Hannibal aims to do exactly that, but seated upon the wooden block, hands squeezing the ropes, everything feels foreign. He can't actually remember a time where he'd done this himself. Of course, as a child, he'd accompanied Mischa to playgrounds, but she was small and chubby and kids can be cruel. Hannibal, unfortunately, can be crueler.

When a boy double Mischa's age oinked at her, the kid's teeth met a metal bar on a merry-go-round. Then his teeth, like chicklets, met the gravel below. Hannibal swore the boy's screams could have been heard for miles. They made Mischa cry.

Another time, a thin little waif of a freckle faced girl, hair a beautiful straw blond in two French braids, kept picking on Mischa. She'd poke at Mischa's belly and pull at Mischa's hair that Hannibal had lovingly tied back with a pretty blue satin bow. That awful little girl tugged said bow away, tossing it into a muddy puddle.

Hannibal had followed that girl when she was on her walk home. *Alone*. Her walk was a quick little traverse through a wooded park, though Hannibal didn't bother to drag her off trail. He simply threw her to it.

Mischa silently watched as Hannibal pulled his little pocket knife from his corduroy trousers. Watched as he hacked all that pretty hair from that girl's head. The girl wailed and screeched, face beat red and splotched with tears. The second Hannibal lifted his weight from her, she scrambled to her feet and ran off.

Hannibal handed the braids over to Mischa. They were hers now. She stared down at them where they lay glistening in her small palm.

"You shouldn't have done that," she'd told him.

"Why not?"

“It was mean.”

“She was mean.”

“Two wrongs don’t make a right.”

Hannibal blinked. Not really understanding. “I held back. Her scalp was perfectly intact.”

Mischa sighed, hand dropping to her side, fingers clenching the hair. “You’re so dramatic, Hanni.”

Hannibal glanced to the hair in her hand. “Would you like me to braid your hair like hers?”

Mischa wavered. “Do you even know how?”

“I’d learn for you.”

Mischa’s cherubic features softened. “Okay, but you can’t do anything like that again.”

Hannibal didn’t do anything like that again. He did worse.

A teen boy Hannibal’s own age had been flicking Mischa’s skirts, trying to get a look underneath as she climbed the latter to a slide. She had kicked at the boy, yelling at the kid to stop. He didn’t, not until Hannibal approached. The alpha remembers smiling at the boy in a way that Hannibal wonders if it was how God smiled at Eve after she took a bite of that forbidden apple.

The boy walked away that day, but two weeks later Andrius Juska would be reported missing by his parents. He’d never be found. For some reason, after seeing his face plastered all over the local newspapers, Mischa didn’t want to go to the playground anymore.

The feel of Will’s hands on his back, pushing him on the swing, returns Hannibal to the present. He can’t deny that he has the most spectacular urge to tell Will all about Andrius. He even wants to tell Will how stupid and careless he was in his youth. He wonders if Will would laugh at the fact that Hannibal had been brazen enough to bury Andrius’ mangled body on his family’s wooded estate.

Or maybe Will would call Jack Crawford and have Hannibal arrested.

Before Hannibal can gain any real momentum, he plants his feet on the ground and turns in his seat to face Will who steadies the swing, one gloved hand above Hannibal’s on the rope.

Hannibal tries to keep his jaw locked. The monster in him has the master key. “Have you ever killed anyone?”

Will furrows his brow. “Besides my father?”

Hannibal nods. “Besides your father.”

“Not directly.”

Unfortunately, as Hannibal stares up at him, soulful blues meeting empty amber, the alpha gets the distinct impression that Will is telling the truth. For some reason, it disappoints Hannibal. It's expected, but it disappoints.

He wants Will vicious.

He wants Will *hungry*.

"Are you going to ask me?" Hannibal questions. He won't tell the truth. He can't. Yet, he wants will to wonder.

Will smirks. "Do I even need to?" Will playfully tugs at the alpha's earlobe. "Doctor Hannibal '*the cannibal*' Lecter."

Hannibal's exterior hardens despite the way his heart thumps so wildly with excitement he feels woozy with it. He turns back in his seat, lifts his feet, and Will gives him a push.

#

When Hannibal jumps, he doesn't land it either. Whether it be the marijuana he smoked, the booze he drank, or the anchor in his heart belonging wholly to Will that drags him down, he doesn't know. He doesn't even care. He should give his incoordination more thought, but as he falls to his knees, hands bracing his fall, he's busy listening to the swish-swish of Will's pants and his boots crunching in the snow as he runs near.

The omega leaps onto Hannibal's back, hugging his arms around the alpha's neck and burying his face right in the crook of it.

"Some peacock you are," Will happily grumbles.

Hannibal squeezes Will's forearms. Holds them tightly to him. He's not one for wishes. They've always seemed like such silly, frivolous, childish things. If Hannibal wanted something, he made it happen. Yet, in this moment, he finds himself wishing he could tell the omega that he's a ripper, not a peacock.

#

By the time they trudge inside, Will's eyes are drooping. They both need sleep.

They tiredly peel off their layers, and while Will just drops them where he stands, Hannibal gathers everything and returns the items to the closet.

Will excuses himself to the bathroom, returning with the scent of mint on his breath. Hannibal retreats there afterward, taking his overnight bag. He changes into a pair of striped pajamas, brushes his teeth, washes his face, tones, moisturizes, and combs his hair.

Hannibal barely restrains himself from rushing back to Will. Though upon first glance of the omega, he thinks he should have. He finds the young man clad save for the alpha's wrinkled cashmere sweater, the legs of Will's navy-blue boxer shorts peeking out from beneath the

hem. The sleeves are a little long, the waist a bit baggy, Will's shoulder's not nearly broad enough to fill the garment out.

The alpha's thoughts whiz and whirl to the land of all things unholy.

"I hope you don't mind," Will says, pulling the loose collar up around his chin, scenting the fabric. "It smells like you."

Hannibal wants to growl. He wants to pounce. He wants to drag Will to that abhorrent thing he calls a bed and *maul* him.

"Sweetheart, you look divine."

Will flushes, yet grins even brighter, heart-stoppingly breath-takingly beautiful, and excitedly, adorably twirls, giving Hannibal the full view. Hannibal doesn't know where to look. At those strong shapely legs, that smoothly defined chest where he's scandalously left the zipper down, or his pretty, perfect, lovely face.

"You're gorgeous, darling. Exceptional in every way."

Will rolls his eyes, pretends to be unbothered by the compliment, but he flushes something magnificent. Even his chest pinkens. He remains charmingly boyish as he scampers for the bed, turning a lone lamp off along the way. The living room darkens, the flickering licks of flames in the hearth the only thing keeping the room softly aglow.

Will shoos Jack and Ellie onto the floor with the rest of the pack as he crawls up the bed, the metal frame creaking, springs squeaking. The omega flops his back onto a pile of lumpy sagging pillows at the head of the bed while his legs tangle amongst furry unkempt blankets. It's the way Will pats the spot beside himself, however, impatiently asking, "What are you waiting for?" that has Hannibal's heart fiercely thumping, desire and adoration thrumming through him in equal measure.

"I didn't want to assume."

"By all means," Will says, brow raised, a suggestive little smirk playing on those petal pink lips, "*assume*."

Hannibal doesn't have to be told twice. The bed-frame creaks and the mattress dips as Hannibal's knees hit it. Will wastes no time lurching forward, reaching for the alpha, grabbing hold of his collar, dragging Hannibal down against the mattress, a thin white fitted sheet covering it.

Will pulls the blankets over them, snuggling close while eager lips, parted in a smile, brush against Hannibal's, whispering, "Your old man pajamas are ridiculous."

Tickled and delighted, never so pleased to be offended, Hannibal deeply kisses the omega, pulling him closer—Will half on top of him, making soft breathless noises so prettily in the alpha's arms.

"I'll be sure to bring my lingerie next time," Hannibal jests.

Will laughs into the kiss, saying, “You’d look hilarious in a G-string.”

Hannibal wants to grab the omega’s glutes, palm his thighs, and slide a hand down the back of Will’s boxer-shorts while telling him, *‘You, on the other hand...’*

He doesn’t despite his want for it. The scent of marijuana lingers in Will’s shiny curls and the vaguest wafts of alcohol seep from his pores. Hannibal wants to be a great many things to Will Graham... a regret isn’t one.

Will eventually comes to rest his head on Hannibal’s chest, the alphas arm firmly around the omega. Will looks tired, yet happy. Eyes half lidded while a handsome hand fiddles with the buttons on Hannibal’s night shirt. He untucks a few, glancing up at Hannibal with that all too familiar mischievous gleam in his beautiful ocean gaze.

“Can I see you?” Will asks, curiously meek.

Hannibal nods, his desire for Will making his nethers achingly stiff. Will must be aware of what he does the alpha. Maybe that’s the point. Maybe he likes to tease. Maybe Hannibal wants to be teased. He thinks he does as he watches Will’s fingers slowly and carefully unbutton his nightshirt.

Will parts the material, one side sliding off Hannibal’s belly and pooling at his side.

“Take it off?” Will requests, voice barely above a whisper.

Hannibal sits up slightly, letting the shirt fall from his shoulders. Will avidly onlooking as he helps the alpha from his sleeves, carelessly discarding it from the bed. It lands in a heap on poor Max, startling the dog awake. He shakes himself free of the shirt, though sweet Ellie is quick to curl herself atop the garment and right against the border collie’s side.

Hannibal returns his head to the pillows. Will, perched on one elbow, inquisitively wide eyed, stares at Hannibal’s body as if he’s never gazed upon an alpha like this before. Will had given the impression of an experienced omega, but the way he presses a hesitant hand to Hannibal’s firm belly, feeling the muscles that tense beneath his fingertips, makes Hannibal think otherwise.

Will’s touch slides upwards, between defined pectorals, and into the course thatch of hair on Hannibal’s chest. Will lowers his head, pressing his nose to it, flush with Hannibal’s skin. Will inhales. He’s subtle about it, but Hannibal can see the way Will’s nostrils flare, can hear the intake of air. Will’s eyes flutter closed as he snuggles up to Hannibal, replacing his nose with his cheek and throwing one leg across Hannibal’s two.

Will hugs an arm around the alpha’s middle, squeezing, and sleepily nuzzles where he lays. “I wanna live right here,” he tiredly mumbles, “Your heartbeat lulling me to sleep and your scent everywhere.”

Hannibal isn’t prepared for the happy ache that shivers its way through him. He’s never felt such bliss. He closes his eyes as he smiles to himself, his fingers languidly, adoringly combing their way through Will’s hair.

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

Oh my god, this chapter is beyond overdue. I'm sorry it took me over a YEAR to post. Sometimes that fire you feel while writing a story dies a little. Sometimes it takes awhile for those flames to return. I believe they call it writers block, haha!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dappling winter sunlight streams through thin lacy curtains that have yellowed with age.

Dogs rustle. Harley is snoring. Buster is licking at his paws.

Hannibal wakes in increments. His consciousness coming slowly. His fingers, the ones so incredibly adept at killing, twitch over soft supple skin, that, at first, he doesn't quite recognize as Will's.

The room is chilly. Not even embers left in the fireplace. Goosebumps prick the alpha's exposed shoulders. Will smooths them out. His touch deliciously scalding, rough working hands leaving tingling trails of warmth in their wake.

It takes a few minutes for Hannibal to realize he's being held, that somehow, they've managed to trade places while they slept. It takes him a little while longer to conclude he's never felt peace quite like this. He's half asleep and he doesn't want to wake from the tranquility of it. He wants to stay in this dreamlike state, right here, in the comforting arms of this—of his?—omega.

There's an infinitesimal part of Hannibal, one he loathes to acknowledge and pretends never existed, of a child that once was. It's needy and unfathomably lonely and wants to curl into Will, to *snuggle* against him while being told he's a precious boy... a wonderful boy... an *exceptional* boy. And while that boy was never kind nor caring, didn't have a shred of empathy or a lick of innocence, fantasizing as he did of horror and gore, he still had something inside himself that all other children possessed, the desire to be loved for who he is.

Hannibal would like to proclaim he's grown out of such frivolous and immature yearnings, but Will has turned that simmer into a roiling boil and there's simply no denying how desperately Hannibal wants to sink his vicious claws into the omega's heart and carve out a place for himself within it.

But for now... like bobbing in calm waters, Hannibal's head lifts and descends with the rise and fall of Will's breaths. He can hear the air in Will's lungs come and go, as well as the strong and steady thump of his heart. What's most appealing, however, is Will's intoxicating omegan scent absolutely *everywhere*.

Will is unmistakably fertile. It calls to the monster in Hannibal more than it ought to. Makes it think of things it shouldn't... like little monsters. Ones with Will's curls and Hannibal's cruel gaze. Ones with Hannibal's countenance and Will's empathetic eyes. Ones with Will's sunshiny smile and Hannibal's lust for blood.

Hannibal barely retains a shiver of excitement. There's always the chance, however, that maybe they'd be nothing like either one of them. Maybe they'd be like Mischa. Maybe she'd come back to him.

Then again, maybe she wouldn't want to.

A gentle hand pushes away the hair that's flopped across Hannibal's forehead, combing it messily into place.

"Your thoughts are loud but I can't make out the words." Will's voice is quiet, soft, like feathers and dust and how snow flutters.

Hannibal doesn't open his eyes, though his hand tenses. It's buried beneath Will's—Hannibal's—sweater, just below Will's ribs, holding the omega's smooth side.

"I'm contemplating the future."

Will makes a thoughtful noise, fingers lazily carding their way through Hannibal's hair. "Am I in it?"

Now Hannibal eyes open. He tilts his head to look up at Will, getting an awfully good view of his scruffy jaw. "Do you want to be?"

Will smiles, small and deceptively innocent. He draws a trail through Hannibal's hair with his index finger, curves it around the alpha's ear. "I might keep you. You're easy on the eyes."

"Ah, so that's how it is," Hannibal happily huffs, closing his eyes while resisting the urge to nuzzle. "You only want me for my looks."

"And your money."

Hannibal doesn't believe him in the slightest. "Fibber."

Will prods at the alpha's ear, tracing its curvature. "Are you accusing me of substance?"

"Mmm," Hannibal hums, burying his nose in the chest of their shared sweater. He deeply inhales, reveling in their combined scent. "I strongly suspect you are far more than a pretty face."

Will pinches the lobe of Hannibal's ear. The alpha's vision flies upward, directly onto the omega's coy smile.

"You think I'm pretty?"

“Pretty is a woefully insufficient word,” Hannibal explains. “You’re the wind that howls, the rain that pours, and the lightning that strikes. You are a storm that men severely underestimate.”

“A doctor and a poet.” Will’s face scrunches like he’s trying not to laugh. “Remind me, who wants who for their looks?”

“How you misjudge me,” Hannibal sighs, rising to an elbow so he can look upon Will. He’s not disappointed. Weeks old scruff, sleepy eyes, and a small barely-there smile so gorgeous it makes Hannibal’s pitiful heart *throb* and his mouth water. He wants to bite that smile. He wants to taste it.

Hannibal settles for kissing it.

#

It’s unlike Hannibal to laze around in bed. However, this morning he indulges himself and intently watches Will’s capable hands build them a fire. Max is sprawled beside Hannibal on the bed—a disgusting habit that Will seems in no rush to quell.

Nevertheless, Hannibal drags his fingers through the border collie’s silky fur, Max staring at the alpha with avid brown eyes. Will catches sight of the pair when he glances over his shoulder. Will’s expression turns soft and delicately fond.

“He doesn’t usually like people, especially alphas,” Will says as he tends the fire. “His previous owner used to beat him.”

Hannibal’s reptilian gaze slips from Will’s back and slithers to Max. Their eyes catch. There’s intelligence there, limited though it may be, and if Hannibal isn’t deceiving himself, then perchance there’s a mote of understanding too. Can the canine sense the monster beneath Hannibal’s thin layer of human flesh? Can he smell the abomination that wriggles beneath Hannibal’s person suit?

Hannibal slides a gentle palm over the side of Max’s muzzle, over his cheek, and scratches behind an ear, the dog leaning ever closer. Hannibal is a horrendously bad man—an undeniably cruel man, and most, if not all, should they ever truly come to know him, would say he’s an evil man, and yet, he’d derive no pleasure barreling his fists into Max. The notion seems particularly... unevolved.

“Do you recall their name?” Hannibal finds himself asking.

Will huffs out a raspy laugh. “Why? You gonna eat them too?”

Hannibal strokes his fingers over Max’s head, right between his ears, and as suddenly as the alpha thinks it, he says it aloud, “I could certainly add them to my list.”

That gives Will pause, and Hannibal watches as he slowly, partially turns around, brow creased as he looks at Hannibal. “What would you make?”

“Hmm,” Hannibal hums, imagining all the possibilities. “I could venture into something new.” He settles his eyes on Max once more, something distinctly out of place and undeniably tender shines behind them. “Dabble in the art of canine cuisine, perhaps.”

Max scoots closer, pressing his snout to Hannibal’s nose, giving it a hesitant lick. Hannibal should feel repulsed and tendril of it is certainly there. However, something awfully close to excitement bubbles inside Hannibal and it spills over, resulting in a subtle yet true smile as he looks to Will and says, “Max approves.”

Will is standing now, nearing the bed, face startlingly indecipherable. “You’d feed that piece of shit to Max?”

Hannibal blinks. Smile gone. “Did I offend you?”

Will’s knees touch down on the thin lumpy mattress. He crawls toward Hannibal. It should look silly, though in all honesty, Will appears ferally handsome. He looks like he might attack. Hannibal is utterly enthralled as Will straddles him, leaning into his space and grabbing his jaw, forcing the alpha to look at him straight on.

“Did you offend me?” Will questions, lips so tantalizingly close to Hannibal’s own that he can feel Will’s breath on them. “Hannibal, alpha, *baby*, that is the sweetest fucking thing anybody has ever said to me.”

Hannibal’s misshapen ugly heart does this funny thing. It shakes, it jumps, it expands, and grows so large inside his chest that Hannibal can’t even breathe. Hannibal finds himself frightened, though maybe that isn’t quite the right word to describe Hannibal now, but he is wary—not of Will in this moment, but of losing this feeling because he’s never felt so full. He’s never felt so warm. He’s never felt so goddamn *seen* or appreciated—not as he truly is.

“Will Graham,” Hannibal blissfully murmurs, unable to keep the adoration from his tone. “I’d commit unimaginable horrors for you.”

The smile that graces Will’s lips is beautifully fragile, like butterfly wings, orchid petals, and glittering frost decorating blades of grass. His touch turns gentle, palm caressing Hannibal’s cheek, and Hannibal, *well*, he’s beside himself with wonder as he leans into the touch, damn near feral for it.

Hannibal gently grips Will’s hand, slides it over his mouth and presses a reverent kiss to the omega’s palm and each pad of his fingers. Their eyes steadily hold, Will gazing down at the alpha with a look that Hannibal can’t quite discern. It’s tentative, yet soft and unlike anything Hannibal has ever seen before.

Naturally, this is when plodding feet can be heard climbing up the porch steps and, of course, the dogs lose their minds when a fist pounds on the door, Alana’s voice on the other side, shouting, “Will! Open up! Will!”

Will’s eyes don’t go wide, a look of surprise doesn’t contort his handsome features, *no*. For a brief moment in time a darkness takes hold—blink and you’d miss it. For a glaring second, he looks positively murderous, and yet, as he climbs from the bed, there’s not even a faint

glimpse of it lingering. He certainly doesn't seem pleased by Alana's untimely arrival, but he also looks utterly harmless as he slowly trudges forward on bare feet.

The snick of a lock is heard and Alana lets herself in, keys jangling in her neatly manicured hand. She's not dressed for the weather *at all*. She's wearing a form fitted pinstripe dress, a mink collared peacoat, and *heels* covered in snow. Hannibal wonders how her car managed up the driveway, and he has the distinct feeling it *didn't*. She'd trudged through sleet and snow in her red soled Christian Louboutin's to get to Will.

Of course, dogs surround her, though not before the look of utter relief crosses her feminine features as she catches sight of Will, and then promptly dies once she looks past the omega and spots Hannibal. She had to have seen his Bentley, though likely didn't expect to find him in Will's bed.

Will shoos the dogs away and ushers them outside, all except Max who lies loyally at Hannibal's side. All the while Alana stares incredulously at a shirtless Hannibal wrapped cozily in Will's threadbare blankets, deft fingers lazily combing their way through silky fur. He wants to smile wickedly at her. He doesn't.

She looks away, blinks, and sets her sights on Will. "I've been trying to get ahold of you all morning. I've been worried."

"Oh," is all Will says, eyes flitting about the room. "I don't see my phone."

Will leaves the room with no explanation, though the sound of him opening the hallway closet where the coats and boots are stored, rifling through its contents, explains his absence enough.

Again, Alana's attention lands on Hannibal. The cannibal smiles pleasantly.

"Good morning," Hannibal warmly greets her.

Alana deeply frowns, though it's no matter since Will reenters the room and steals Hannibal's focus.

Winter boots clunk loosely against the floor boards, laces untied, bare legs on salacious display. Hannibal hungrily devours the sight of the omega in nothing but boxers, Hannibal's shirt, and the Minnesota Shrike's boots, also previously worn by the Chesapeake Ripper. Maybe they'll be in a museum one day.

"I might've lost my phone last night in the snow," Will says, causing Alana's frown to dip even further, this time with concern. "I'll be right back," he says, though he stops at his dresser, tugs open the third drawer down and pulls from it a black cotton t-shirt. On his way out, he tosses it at Hannibal, smiling sweetly, but not innocently, yet very handsomely, and says, "I bought this for you." And then he clicks his tongue, and calls, "C'mon Maxxie, time to go pee."

Alana watches the omega go, so does Hannibal, and once the door shuts behind him and Max, who obediently follows, her eyes chill and shift to Hannibal.

“What the *hell*, Hannibal?!” She exclaims, clearly pained. She looks so wholly betrayed that Hannibal finds himself annoyed.

So, Hannibal doesn’t dignify her with a response, lest he say something he ought not to, and he shifts, sitting up and pulling on the shirt. Once his arms and head are through, he’s dismayed to find bold red lettering on the front.

Alana eyes it quizzically and reads the words aloud, “You say cannibal, I say humanitarian.” Her face pinches. Hannibal’s heart ferociously pounds, or maybe it’s just the monster beating on the inside of his chest with unrestrained excitement. “Why would he get you that?”

Hannibal stands, smoothing his palms over the wrinkles of his pajama pants, at the same time he says, “It’s an inside joke between friends.”

“Friends?” Alana questions, rightly incredulous.

Hannibal nods, just a slight dip of his chin. “Indeed.”

Alana gazes heatedly at the alpha. “Alphas and omegas can’t be friends, Hannibal.” She glances to the bed behind him. “Obviously.”

Hannibal steps a little closer, feigning sympathy for her frivolous feelings. “I can assure you, at the very least, I was a perfect gentleman. We kissed and we cuddled. Nothing more, nothing less.”

Alana genuinely looks like she might cry. She won’t. She’d never humiliate herself in such a way, but the feeling is there, and Hannibal has the urge to cut it out of her—to slice and dice and gobble it all up.

“Was Will?” She asks, brows raised.

“A perfect gentleman?” Hannibal queries in response. “I can’t imagine him being anything less.” While that is technically a blatant lie, Hannibal would never admit that his omega is an uncouth little shit in such undeserving company.

She looks about as convinced as she should be. So, not at all.

“I know him better than you, Hannibal.” It sounds like a warning.

“I am envious.” This is the truth.

“Hannibal,” she pleads, “Will is *fucking* with you.”

Hannibal frowns because that’s what he believes he should do in this situation. “Alana…”

She shakes her head and moves forward, clasping his hand in her two. “I’m serious. Please listen to me.”

Hannibal demurely nods his assent. “I am.” He’s not, but that’s neither here nor there.

“Will knew who you were before the gala.” *Now* Hannibal is listening.

He furrows his brow. “He did?”

“Yes—I didn’t... I should’ve said something sooner.” Perhaps, but where’s the fun in that? “He knew what you were to me.”

“Your friend?”

Alana’s face sours and Hannibal silently revels in it. “He saw your picture in my office years ago, when were—” She pauses, she can’t even say it, so Hannibal does.

“Lovers.”

Alana’s pretty eyes shine brightly, not with tears but with fond memories. She nods. “He was all of 16 when he saw a picture of us together on my desk.”

“That was quite some time ago,” Hannibal says, implying that Will may not even remember his face. *But*, Hannibal thinks, his sly little omega just might. He probably does. The Will he envisions in his mind would never forget his alpha’s face.

She brushes his comment off and tries to explain, “It was my favorite picture of us.”

Hannibal knows the one, and paints a tender smile across his lips. “The one of us dancing. You were gorgeous that night.” He thinks better of his comment and adds, “You always are.”

Alana lowers her chin and gazes forlornly at their connected hands. “He took one look at you and asked me why I was dancing with a psychopath.”

The monster in Hannibal turns over, blinks wide awake. There’s no way Will could simply look at a picture of him and just *know*. Surely not.

“Will was a child...” Hannibal says. “A traumatized one.”

She nods, “I know, but your shirt...” They both look at it. *You say cannibal, I say humanitarian*. “Back then, I tried to tell him what a good and honest man you are, but he wouldn’t hear it. I told him you loved me. I asked him how he couldn’t see it in your eyes. In the picture, you’re looking at me like I’m the only thing in the world that exists... that you adore me...”

Hannibal suspects her memory of the picture might be slightly exaggerated. While there was a time where he was keen to tolerate her since she’s fairly intelligent and looked so nice dangling off his arm, his fondness for her was little more than lukewarm. Granted, he did ham it up quite a bit for both their benefit.

“And what did Will say about that?”

Alana’s pretty rouge slicked lips turn downwards and she squeezes his hand. “He told me that you weren’t looking at me like you loved me. He said you were looking at me like you wanted to *eat* me.”

Chapter End Notes

Apologies for this being so short, but it's been so long since I posted and this chapter was like pulling teeth. I just wanted to give you guys what I had. I figured it was better than nothing.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!